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Publication – Spring and Autumn each year

Editorial Office

International Baptist Theological Seminary
Nad Habrovkou 3, Jenerálka, Praha 6, CZ 164 00

ISSN 1803 – 618X

Publisher

Mezinárodní baptistický teologický seminář
Evropské baptistické federace, o.p.s.
Nad Habrovkou 3, 164 00 Praha 6, Česká Republika

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Contents

Introduction	v
1: 1: Psalm 110, Melchizedek and David: Blessing (the descendants of) Abraham	1
Robin Routledge	
2: Praying the Blessing of Psalm 110: A Response	17
Andrew Dyck	
3: Observations on the Songs of Ascents: A Discussion about the so-called Zion-theology of Psalms 120-134	24
Michael Rhode	
4: Jesus and Evil Spirits in the Light of Psalm 91	43
Craig A. Evans	
5: Psalms and the Psalms in Luke's Infancy Narrative	59
Christoph Stenschke	
6: God's Mercy from Generation to Generation: Luke's use of Psalms 105-108 in his Infancy Narrative Songs to Provide a Salvation Historical Understanding for his two-volume History	93
Rollin G. Grams	
7: The Use of Psalms in Mark	109
Timothy J. Geddert	

Introduction

Keynotes on Psalms

Peter F Penner

Psalms are the most read and known texts of the Bible. The collection of Psalms in the Bible has a central role throughout the Christian Scriptures. They reflect on the Law of God and on the journey of individuals and the people of God; they lead us in worship, help us to formulate our laments and our prayers of thanksgiving, and encourage us to witness to the goodness of God. Throughout time, they have been and still are important to the faithful people of God.¹ From this, one may feel ‘that everything that could have been said about the Psalter must have been said already’ (Wenham 2009: Memorisation). The IBTS Biblical Studies Colloquium on the Psalms, held 22-24 January 2009, demonstrates that there is still much more to discover.

The presentations at the Colloquium, collected in this journal, reflect upon the Psalms from two different perspectives: from within the Old Testament and from within the New Testament. In the first category, Robin Routledge, along with a response from Andrew Dyck, reflect, on the continuous influence of Melchizedek’s and David’s blessing, based on Psalm 110. Michael Rohde follows with a discussion of Zion theology as possibly observed in the Songs of Ascents. Articles written by New Testament scholars look at how thinking during Jesus’ time resonates with ideas from the Psalms (‘Jesus and Evil Spirits in the Light of Psalm 91’ by Craig A. Evans) and how the Psalms have influenced New Testament personalities and the evangelists in their worship and writing (Christoph Stenschke’s, Rollin G. Grams’ and Timothy J. Geddert’s articles).

Most of the colloquium contributions are presented in this journal, with a few exceptions which are published elsewhere: Dávid Nemeshegyi’s article on the ‘Acts of destruction and acts of creation in Psalm 74’, Paul Kissling’s paper on ‘A Diasporan Setting for Psalm 119’ and Craig Evans’ paper on ‘Praise and Prophecy in the Psalter and in the New Testament Psalms’.

The tenor of the entire discussion on Psalms, however, was set by the keynote speaker, Gordon Wenham, who, in three papers, emphasised three major issues: (1) on the memorisation of Scripture, including the Psalms; (2) on how reader-response and speech-act theory can enhance an

¹ From the announcement of the Biblical Studies Colloquium on Psalms at IBTS (<http://www.ibts.eu/research/ibs>).

understanding of Psalms; and (3) on praying the Psalms. To help the reader to have a fuller picture of the colloquium and the context in which the articles published here were presented, I give a summary of the three papers delivered by Gordon Wenham.

1. Memorisation of biblical literature including the Psalter²

Gordon Wenham, in his article on memorisation, builds his argument following two key studies by David Carr and Paul Griffiths.³ The specific contribution of Gordon Wenham is, ‘to apply their ideas to the Psalter’. In chapter 2 on Ancient Mesopotamia, Carr argues that pedagogy and written texts ‘facilitate the oral learning... and the memorization and performance of standard Sumerian and Akkadian works’ (Carr 2005:27). For other ancient cultures the written text was also intended to pass on knowledge to the next generations. Wenham points out that the biblical text itself underscores this argument in Deuteronomy 31:19-22. The written text was rare and so most knew passages from the biblical text by heart. The Psalms were not excluded from this praxis and were purposefully designed ‘to be memorised’ for continuous recall and recitation. Wenham says in his paper that it changes our reading of Psalm 1 when we picture a righteous who meditates on the law not from a scroll but through his memorising it and speaking it out loud to himself so that it sinks into the person and his heart (Wenham 2009: Memorisation). Memorisation in education was normal practice until the invention of the printing press.⁴ While it continued to be used even later, today it seems to have become extinct because of new media which connect to a particular text with the click of a mouse, but disconnect the person from the praxis and the context of the text.

In his paper Gordon Wenham argues that the Psalter looks like an ordered compilation. ‘The psalms are discrete units, and the variety of titles has long suggested to commentators that they are drawn from a variety of earlier collections’ (Wenham 2009: Memorisation). Different anonymous as well as Davidic, Asaphite, or other collections older than the present Psalms lead to assume that the Psalter has been a ‘carefully organized anthology’ (ibid.). The religious anthologies were meant, according to Wenham with Griffiths, to be memorised as most people, until the time of

² Gordon Wenham, ‘Memorisation of Biblical Literature Including the Psalter’, Paper presented on 22 January 2009. I will continue to refer to this paper as (Wenham 2009: Memorisation).

³ David M. Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart* (Oxford: OUP, 2005) and Paul G. Griffiths, *Religious Reading: The Place of Reading in the Practice of Religion* (Oxford: OUP, 1999).

⁴ Paul Griffiths argues in his book that the continued praxis of memorising was part of religious education for the last millennia.

the printing press, could not afford handwritten texts. Beside economic considerations, memorised religious text was ‘directly relevant to what you take to be the central questions of your life, the questions around which your life is orientated’, argues Griffiths (1999: 10). The memorised text is, for the person, a rich experience, a delight and a beautiful piece of art; the entire Psalter fits this description. As the text is memorised, it enters the person and forms his/her character, the text is lived out by the memoriser (Wenham 2009: Memorisation). This is even more true as the Psalms ‘were designed to be sung not merely recited’ (ibid.). Singing a psalm helps not only to better memorise, but also to identify with the words cited. The written text does not stand in contrast to the memorised text but guarantees that the properly memorised text was lived out by individuals as well as in community.

2. The contribution of reader-response and speech-act theory to the understanding of the Psalms⁵

In his second paper Gordon Wenham focuses on the usefulness of reader-response and speech-act theory for the reading and interpretation of the Psalms. Both hermeneutical approaches are welcomed by the keynote speaker and appreciated as he follows Dorothea Erbele-Küster on reader-response and Donald Evans on speech-act theory from his 50-year-old but very helpful publication.⁶ Both approaches are indeed important if the Psalms are memorised, as previously mentioned, sung accompanied by music and used in worship at the time of their origin as well as in today’s Jewish and Christian worship. Let us first look at the different aspects which the approaches contribute toward an understanding of the Psalms as offered by Gordon Wenham.

With Erbele-Küster, Gordon Wenham argues that in reading the Psalms one needs to distinguish between reading as a biblical scholar from a critical distance and the religious reading where the person becomes involved and experiences the content of the Psalms by praying or singing the text. At the same time, academic and religious reading ‘are not mutually exclusive: they can shed light on each other’ (Wenham 2009: Contribution and Erbele-Küster 2001:51). Even if the Psalm titles may not be historically reliable, like those referring to king David, they ‘encourage the later reader

⁵ Gordon Wenham, ‘The Contribution of Reader-Response and Speech-Act Theory to the Interpretation of the Psalms’, Paper presented on 23 January, 2009. I will refer to this paper as (Wenham 2009: Contribution).

⁶ Dorothea Erbele-Küster, *Lesen als Akt des Betens: Eine Rezeptionsästhetik der Psalmen* (WMANT 87. Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 2001) and Donald D. Evans, *The Logic of Self-Involvement* (London: SCM, 1963).

to identify with their sentiments' (Wenham 2009: Contribution, and Erbele-Küster 2001:68,109). Involvement with the text of the Psalms leads the worshipper to identify with the viewpoints and the values of the Psalmist, seeking the blessing attached to it, and identifying with God's viewpoint on a variety of issues.

The speech-act theory has been applied to biblical texts, as noted in Thiselton's monumental work on hermeneutics,⁷ and its usefulness in interpretation has been noticed but not much used in the interpretation of Psalms. Donald Evans' book, as other publications, have inspired Wenham to apply the method in order 'to illuminate the ethics of the Psalms'. Compared with the laws and other documents to which someone could listen or recite, the 'reciter or singer of the Psalms is thus involved in giving very active assent to the standards of the life implied in the Psalms' (Wenham 2009: Contribution). The user of a Psalm together with the original author expresses, affirms and declares the standards defined in the text and promises to keep them. Wenham, together with Evans, underlines that prayed Psalms involve commitment and commissives, such as 'promise', 'pledge', 'accept', 'undertake', 'engage', 'threaten', 'swear loyalty', 'declare as policy', 'take as wife', which lead to action, and behabitives, such as 'praise', 'thank', 'apologize', 'commend', 'blame', 'reprimand', 'glorify', 'worship', 'confess', 'welcome', 'protest', 'accuse', which express attitudes (Wenham 2009: Contribution, and Evans 1963:29). Wenham rightfully underlines that in the Psalms God's promises are commissives and that a person using the first-person statements of the Psalms is self-involved and commits to what s/he expresses by singing, reciting and praying with the Psalms. Thus, Gordon Wenham proves with his paper the usefulness and applicability of reader-response and speech-act theory to the Psalms and the contribution of these approaches in underlining the ethical dimension of Psalms to readers and singers throughout time.

3. Praying the Psalms⁸

In his third paper Gordon Wenham invites contemporary Christian individuals and communities to actually pray the Psalms and thus join the Israel community of the past, Jesus, Paul and the early Christian church as well as many saints of the past and present. Psalms are not simply a reality of the past and of the old covenant or a dusty tradition kept alive by Old

⁷ Anthony Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992).

⁸ Gordon Wenham, 'Praying the Psalms', Paper presented on 24 January 2009. I will refer to this paper as (Wenham 2009: Praying).

Testament scholarship. If Jesus has prayed them, and Wenham argues with others that Jesus probably prayed through the Psalms as he went through suffering and death, and the early church did in and beyond the New Testament, we should join this crowd of saints and make use of their words, which express the variety of experiences on our and our sisters' and brothers' journey following our God and King. He lists a number of different key topics that the Psalms pick up while inviting us to join God's praise, what *tehillim* really means. Wenham points to different kinds of praise in the Psalter, such as, in general, praising God for creation and, in particular, for salvation and for God's deeds of salvation in the past, for answer to prayer. The longest Psalm (Ps. 119), designed alphabetically, demonstrates that the law is perfect and invites the praying person to express love to the law, praise the one who installed it and to meditate on it with delight (Wenham 2009: Praying).

Psalms not only express praise in their variety; a major portion of the 150 Psalms are laments. Gordon Wenham raises the question as to whether they can be used today and proves that they should be, as they are the most quoted in the New Testament. These laments are prayed by our Lord on the way to the cross and by the saints in the book of Revelation. Laments allow a more realistic expression of pain in Christian communities as many people throughout history and at present carry heavy burdens, suffer persecution and are encouraged as they repeat the Psalms of lamentation. But even if we presently are not going through difficulties, sorrow and tribulation, Gordon Wenham argues, many around us experience such and joining with and for them teaches us to empathise with their suffering (Wenham 2009: Praying). Some of the lament Psalms call for God's vengeance and seem not to fit into the new covenant of love and forgiveness. While Wenham does not relieve the tension, he argues that to call for God's vengeance in expressive words is far better than to take the law into our own hands. But he also argues that those words 'express hope that God's justice will prevail' and have an educational dimension as they 'uncover the web of violence' (Wenham 2009: Praying).

Two more Psalm categories need to be mentioned as we follow Gordon Wenham through the Psalms and their role in ancient and present life: the penitential and the messianic Psalms. There are seven particular pieces that 'are called penitential psalms because they have traditionally been used for self-examination and confession of sins': Psalm 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130 and 143 (Wenham 2009: Praying). They speak in the first person singular and each of us has the opportunity to express for ourselves as well as together, as in the Lord's prayer, a confession, and also identify in confession with others. The messianic royal Psalms (2, 45, 72, 89, 110,

132, 144) are traditionally understood by Jewish and Christian communities as prophetic, as speaking about 'David's greater son'. Such Psalms are not victorious and heroic by their nature, but join in laments and indicate the Messiah's struggle, suffering and even death. They also invite the reader or singer to hope and to trust in God's promises. Overall, the Psalms invite us, according to Wenham, 'to expand the scope of our prayers to take in the hurts of our world not just its joys'. 'As Christians', Wenham continues, 'we are like the master, called to suffer before we enter glory. And if we are spared suffering ourselves we should pray for those who do suffer in the words the Holy Spirit has inspired in the Psalms' (Wenham 2009: Praying).

As previously mentioned, these keynote papers have provided the framework for the IBTS Biblical Studies Colloquium and have set the tone for the papers which are published in this journal. It is hoped that, as they have stimulated in participants a deeper appreciation of the Psalms, the articles of this journal will also encourage serious academic work on Psalms as well as a better informed use in individual and church worship. I would like to close with Psalm 67:1-3 (ESV), a missional song of praise, following thus the keynote speaker:

To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments. A Psalm. A Song.
May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face to shine upon us, Selah
that your way may be known on earth,
your saving power among all nations.
Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you!

The Revd Dr Peter F Penner
Professor of New Testament and Mission at TCMI, Austria

1

Psalm 110, Melchizedek and David: Blessing (the descendants of) Abraham

Robin Routledge

Psalm 110 is generally designated a ‘royal psalm’, addressed to the Davidic king by a cultic prophet. The setting may have been the king’s coronation;¹ though some scholars consider the psalm to be part of the annual New Year festival,² in which the earthly king receives from the divine king the renewed promise of universal dominion. The psalm focuses on the relationship between the king who reigns in Jerusalem and Yahweh through whom the king’s victories are achieved. The king has a place of honour at Yahweh’s right hand (v. 1): emphasising his role as Yahweh’s representative, and also his dependence on Yahweh for his power and authority. It is Yahweh who extends the king’s sceptre from Zion (v. 2); and in verses 5-6 victory over the king’s enemies is described in terms of Yahweh’s final judgment on the rulers and nations of the world. Verse 4, which is generally understood as also being addressed to the Davidic king, describes him as a priest – though this is the only passage in the Old Testament explicitly to do so.

There is some debate over the structure of the psalm. Allen is among those who divide it into two parts, marked by the introductions in verse 1 (*the LORD says*) and verse 4 (*the LORD has sworn*) which are then amplified.³ There are some parallels between the two sections – for example ‘right hand’ (יְמִינִי) in verses 1, 5, and ‘on the day’ (בַּיּוֹם) in verses 2, 5. However, while there seems to be a clear link between verses 1-3 and verses 5-6, it is not at all clear where the reference to priesthood in verse 4 fits in. Verses 5-6 appear to continue the theme of verses 1-3, without any

¹ See, e.g., Leslie C. Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, WBC 21 (Waco: Word Books, 1983), p. 83; A.A. Anderson, *Psalms*, 2 vols., NCB (London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1972), 2:767; Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 1:63; Artur Weiser, *The Psalms*, OTL (London: SCM, 1962), p. 693; Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC 1 (Milton Keynes: Word, 1991), p. 322; see also P.J. Nel, ‘Psalm 110 and the Melchizedek Tradition’, *JNSL* 22.1 (1996), pp. 1-14 [11].

² For example Aubrey R. Johnson, *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1967) specifically associates the psalm with the closing stages of the New Year Festival (pp. 130-132); see also J.H. Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms* (London: SCM, 1976).

³ See also, e.g., Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150*, TOTC (London: IVP, 1975), p. 393-396; Weiser, *Psalms*, p. 693 – who both focus the psalm around the two divine oracles; Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms*, NIBC (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999), pp. 414-416 notes the possibility that vv. 1-3 are addressed by a priest to the king, while vv. 4-7 are addressed by the king to the priest.

elaboration of, or even reference to, the statement in verse 4. Allen acknowledges explicitly what is implicit among most commentators, that ‘the poet does not proceed to give a direct explanation of the oracle’ (in v. 4).⁴ That, however, seems strange since *both* oracles are thought to give the psalm its structure, and of the two, the second, with its reference to Yahweh’s irrevocable oath, seems to be the more forceful. Philip Nel prefers a tri-partite structure, and identifies verses 1-3 and verses 5-6 as oracles of blessing relating to submission of enemies; while verse 4, which stands at the centre of what he sees as a circular structure, is an oracle of election of the king as a priest. However, Nel acknowledges that the designation of the king as ‘priest’ (כֹּהֵן) in verse 4 is ‘unfamiliar’;⁵ and that unfamiliarity prompts an elaborate attempt to explain the relationship between this verse and the rest of the psalm. The fact that this and other explanations have been deemed necessary, particularly in the case of a verse considered central to the psalm as a whole, is further indication that the relationship is far from clear.

The purpose of this paper is to consider suggestions of the relationship between the general context of Psalm 110 and the reference to the priestly order of Melchizedek in verse 4, and to attempt an explanation that does justice both to this psalm and to the only other reference to Melchizedek in the Old Testament, Genesis 14:18-20.

We might also point to a number of later writings and interpretations that add interest to this discussion. Psalm 110 is often quoted in the New Testament: there are several references to verse 1; though only the writer to the Hebrews picks up on the reference to Melchizedek in verse 4. And, of course, this writer also builds on Genesis 14 to draw parallels between the priesthood of Melchizedek and the priestly ministry of Jesus. The account of the meeting between Abraham and Melchizedek in Genesis 14 is found in the *Genesis Apocryphon* (from Qumran);⁶ it is also referred to by Philo and Josephus and in some rabbinic texts.⁷ These expand and interpret the Genesis account, as well as making explicit some assumptions – such as the identification of Salem (Gen. 14:18) with Jerusalem, and that the tithe (Gen. 14:20) was given by Abraham to Melchizedek – something that the Hebrew text does not make clear.⁸ Some Rabbis also identify Melchizedek

⁴ Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, p. 87.

⁵ Nel, ‘Psalm 110’, p. 6.

⁶ The *Genesis Apocryphon* is an Aramaic translation of Gen. 14:18-20, written, maybe, at the end of the first century BC.

⁷ For further discussion of later writings that refer to Melchizedek, and a helpful summary of their content, see Fred L. Horton, *The Melchizedek Tradition: A Critical Examination of the Sources to the Fifth Century A.D. and in the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Cambridge: CUP, 1976), pp. 60-82.

⁸ The text says only ‘and he gave him a tenth of everything’ (Gen, 14:20b). The more natural

with Shem, the son of Noah, who, according to the chronology of Genesis, was not only alive at the time of Abraham, but outlived him by a further thirty five years.⁹ This idea continued among Christian commentators – including Luther; though Calvin was less impressed. Some Rabbinic traditions claim that because Melchizedek blessed Abraham before he blessed God, the priesthood was taken from him and conferred on Abraham and his descendants. This is in direct contrast to the interpretation of the passage by the writer of Hebrews, and there may be a hint of anti-Christian polemic; though this may also be a more general attempt to avoid undermining the Levitical priesthood. This material is broadly based on the Old Testament texts. Another text found at Qumran, 11Q Melchizedek, portrays Melchizedek as an eternal, heavenly figure who is identified with God.¹⁰ This very different portrayal has led Horton to note the possibility that this may be based on a stream of tradition separate from what we find in the Old Testament.¹¹ That remains speculation; but even if it is the case, that tradition is almost certainly much later than Psalm 110 and Genesis 14 and so does not in any way influence the view of Melchizedek found there. For that reason I will focus the subsequent discussion primarily on those two passages.

It has been argued, though no longer very forcefully, that Psalm 110 is not directly linked to the Davidic dynasty, but belongs, instead, to the Hasmonean period;¹² maybe to legitimate that family's combination of priestly and royal roles. I Maccabees 14:41 uses language similar to Psalm 110:4 when it describes Simon Maccabeus as 'leader and high priest forever'. However, in that passage, there is no mention of Melchizedek –

understanding is that it is Abraham who gives a tenth of his spoil to Melchizedek; though Fitzmyer suggests that Melchizedek, as a vassal king, gave a tenth of his share to Abraham ('Now this Melchizedek', p. 239); see also J.A. Fitzmyer, 'Melchizedek in the MT, LXX and BT', *Biblica* 81 (2000), pp. 63-69 [66-67].

⁹ According to Gen. 11:10-26, Shem was 390 when Abraham was born, and he died when he was 600. Abraham lived 175 years (Gen. 25:7) – making Shem 565 when he died. See further Horton, *Melchizedek Tradition*, pp. 54-130; for discussion of Melchizedek in church tradition, see also Bruce McNair, 'Luther, Calvin and the Exegetical Traditions of Melchizedek', *Review and Expositor* 101 (2004), pp. 747-761.

¹⁰ See e.g., Horton, *Melchizedek Tradition*, p. 79; M. de Jonge and A.S. Van de Woude, '11Q Melchizedek and the New Testament', *NTS* 12 (1965), pp. 301-326; J.A. Emerton, 'Melchizedek and the Gods: Fresh Evidence for the Jewish Background of John x.34-6', *JTS* 7 (1966), pp. 23-29; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, 'Further Light on Melchizedek from Qumran Cave 11', *JBL* 86.1 (1967), pp. 25-41; Rick van de Water, 'Michael or Yhwh? Toward Identifying Melchizedek in 11Q13', *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 16.1 (2006), pp. 75-86.

¹¹ Horton, *Melchizedek Tradition*, pp. 83-86. He notes that the portrayal of Melchizedek as a heavenly, eschatological figure who is linked with Elohim is not found in other texts (e.g. Philo, Josephus and the Genesis Apocryphon) and so suggests 'two separate streams of tradition' (p. 85). See also Fitzmyer, 'Further Light'; van de Water, 'Michael or Yhwh?'

¹² This was suggested by Duhm. For discussion of this view see, e.g., Horton, *Melchizedek Tradition*, pp. 29-32; E.R. Hardy, 'The Date of Psalm 110', *JBL* 63.3 (1945), pp. 385-390. It is also noted by, e.g., Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, p. 83; Nel, 'Psalm 110', pp. 2,6; M.J. Paul, 'The Order of Melchizedek (Psa. 110:4 and Heb 7:3)', *WTJ* 49 (1987), pp. 195-211 [198-199].

which is not surprising, since the Hasmoneans traced their own priestly ancestry to Aaron and Levi. They did not need to legitimate their right to the priesthood; their problem (if it was a problem) was their right to rule. Certainly, Melchizedek combined both roles, as the Hasmoneans sought to do, and the reference might make some sense if it focused on Melchizedek's kingly status; but to base an appeal on a figure that represents a non-Levitical order of priesthood seems highly improbable – even counter-productive. It is possible that the language of Psalm 110 was applied, selectively, to the Hasmonean dynasty;¹³ but, as most scholars seem to agree, it is very unlikely that the psalm originated during that time.

A more commonly held view is that Psalm 110:4 is intended to legitimate the priestly function of the Davidic king. Before its conquest by David, Jerusalem was occupied by the Jebusites and had its own religious traditions – including the worship of El Elyon.¹⁴ When David captured the city, there was a fusion between the cult of Yahweh and Jebusite mythology, which resulted in a syncretism that may have contributed to the particular traditions associated with Zion – including, possibly, the idea of Zion's inviolability (which may be reflected in the comments made by the Jebusites to David in 2 Sam. 5:6).¹⁵ This syncretism was focused in the belief that David was heir to the traditions associated with the Jebusite kings – and particularly the legendary Melchizedek.¹⁶ This is reinforced by the suggestion that Psalm 110 has strong linguistic links with Ugarit, and may even have been adapted from a Canaanite poem.¹⁷ The link with Melchizedek may have served to secure David's control over, and the allegiance of, the former inhabitants of the city; and, because the Jebusite

¹³ In Jubilees 32:1 the designation of Levi as 'priest of the Most High God, him and his sons forever' is even closer to the formulation in Psa. 110:4. Fitzmyer maintains that 'by the time of the establishment of the Maccabean royal priesthood Melchizedek's designation becomes the official title of the Hasmonean dynasty' (Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "'Now this Melchizedek ...'" (Heb 7:1), in *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1971), pp. 221-243 [235]).

¹⁴ See, e.g., R.E. Clements, *God and Temple* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), pp. 43-49; *ibid.*, *Abraham and David: Genesis XV and its Meaning for Israelite Tradition* (London: SCM, 1967), p. 56; Johnson, *Sacral Kingship*, pp. 46-53; Nel, 'Psalm 110', pp. 5-6. However, see the discussion below.

¹⁵ The Jebusite boast, 'You will not get in here; even the blind and lame can ward you off', might reflect an early belief in Zion's inviolability; though it may simply indicate their confidence in the city's defences. For further discussion of the relationship between Jebusite ideology and Zion tradition see, e.g., John H. Hayes, 'The Tradition of Zion's Inviolability', *JBL* 82.4 (1963), pp. 419-426 (especially pp. 420-422); cf. J.J.M. Roberts, 'The Davidic Origin of the Zion Tradition', *JBL* 92.3 (1973), pp. 329-344.

¹⁶ E.g. Clements, *God and Temple*, pp. 43-44; John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 130-3, cf. J.A. Emerton, 'The Riddle of Genesis XIV', *VT* 21 (1971), pp. 403-439.

¹⁷ On the Canaanite background to Psalm 110 see, e.g., J.H. Patton, *Canaanite Parallels in the Book of Psalms* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1944); Helen G. Jefferson, 'Is Psalm 110 Canaanite?', *JBL* 73.3 (1954), pp. 152-156. Whilst it may be conceded that there is evidence of some Canaanite 'colouring' in the language of the psalm, that does not mean it is Canaanite in origin; see, e.g., Herbert W. Bateman IV, 'Psalm 110:1 and the New Testament', *BibSac* 149 (1992), pp. 438-453 [439-440].

kings were also priests, it legitimated the priestly function of David and his successors.¹⁸

In support of this view, it is pointed out that the king is seen to take on a priestly role. Saul (1 Sam. 13:9) and David (2 Sam. 6:13-14, 17) offered sacrifices – the latter also wearing a priest's ephod; and David's sons are also described as 'priests' (כֹּהֲנִים) (2 Sam. 8:18).¹⁹ However, Saul is criticised for his action;²⁰ and though David is not, his 'priestly' role is limited,²¹ and there is little evidence to suggest that it was in any way typical of the kings of Israel and Judah.²² De Vaux points to areas in which the king did have a cultic role, though notes that this was generally restricted to regulation and supervision. The king was not a priest in the generally accepted sense of that term, and the rare occasions when he became directly involved in performing priestly functions, whilst not generally condemned, were 'special or exceptional'.²³ There appears to be a clear distinction between the roles of king and priest in 2 Chronicles 26:18 – where Uzziah, attempting to burn incense, is challenged by the high priest with the words: *It is not right for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord. That is for the priests, the descendants of Aaron*. Following Wellhausen, this has sometimes been taken to reflect the post-exilic situation, seen in P,

¹⁸ Mowinckel argues that, following Canaanite practice, the king in Israel was a priest-king; he was the principal intermediary between God and the people and as such was the 'true chief priest of his people'; see Sigmund Mowinckel, *He That Cometh* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1959), pp. 37-39, 71-73 [71].

¹⁹ Some see the 'prince' in Ezekiel's vision of the restored temple as also having a priestly role (Ezek. 44:3; 45:16-17, 22-25; 46:2-8); however, though he may have special access to the temple courts, he only provides offerings, the priests offer up the sacrifices (Ezek. 46:2). Given Ezekiel's insistence that only Zadokites may preside in the sanctuary, it would be inconsistent if he then gave authorisation to a non-Zadokite, however important, to act as a priest.

²⁰ The criticism of Saul may have been more to do with the difficulties associated with bringing together the old institutions with the new institution of monarchy. David is generally thought to have brought a greater integration of the old and new and this may be why he is not criticised.

²¹ David does appear to take on a priestly role whilst celebrating the installation of the Ark in Jerusalem – on that occasion he wore a priest's ephod and seems to have been directly involved in offering sacrifices. The other possible reference to David personally offering sacrifices is in 2 Sam. 24:24-25 – though it may be that David, here, supervises rather than kills the animals himself (1 Kgs 3:3, for example, describes Solomon offering a thousand burnt offerings on the altar at Gilgal – but it is highly unlikely that he did that personally). In either case, even David's priestly involvement is very limited.

²² Mowinckel suggests that the king delegated the routine aspects of the role to professional priests – the Levites (*He That Cometh*, p. 71); though this conclusion appears to be a speculative attempt to hold on to the view that kingship in Israel was modelled on Canaanite practice, while also seeking to explain the priestly role of the Levites. It seems much more likely that there was no such dependence on Canaanite custom and that the roles of king and priest were generally distinct from the beginning.

²³ Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1980), pp. 113-114 [114]; see also J.W. Bowker, 'Psalm CX', *VT* 17 (1965), pp. 31-41 [36]; cf. Paul, 'Order of Melchizedek'. Carl E. Armerding, 'Were David's Sons Really Priests?' in *Current Issues in Biblical and Patristic Interpretation: Studies in Honor of Merrill C. Tenney Presented by his Former Students*, ed. by G.F. Hawthorne (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), pp. 75-86, suggests that members of the royal house did serve as (non-Levitical) priests; though he also notes that their function is largely unknown, indicating that they did not fulfil traditional priestly roles.

where the priestly role of the king was reduced, in favour of the Aaronides. However, in the light of the limited direct involvement of the king in cultic matters even in the earlier period, this may be taken as further evidence of the distinction of the roles of king and priest. Bowker agrees with de Vaux, that the king's direct involvement in the cult was exceptional, but argues that it is just this exceptional role of the king that is envisaged in Psalm 110:4; and the link with Melchizedek is 'an attempt to justify the special sense in which David might be called a "priest"'.²⁴ This is an area of discussion that I will return to. For the moment, though, if Psalm 110:4 was, indeed, intended to justify the king's special priestly role, we might expect more than just the declaration, 'You are a priest forever', without any further explanation. Why introduce the defence of a role that is not mentioned anywhere else and appears to have no significance for the rest of the passage? It also seems unlikely that such a strong statement, supported as it is by a divine oath, would be introduced simply to allow the king to perform an occasional cultic act.

In H. H. Rowley's view, the fact that the king did not routinely carry out priestly duties, and so was not '*de facto* the priest as he was the king',²⁵ presents a serious challenge to the view that Psalm 110:4 is intended to endorse the priestly function of the king; and he argues that the verse is not in fact addressed to the Davidic king. Rowley sets Psalm 110 against the background of David's installation as ruler of Jerusalem. When the Ark was brought to the city it was placed in a Jebusite sanctuary dedicated to El Elyon, presided over by Zadok, who was, originally, a Jebusite priest.²⁶ His name, from the root זדק links him with Melchizedek and also another king of Jerusalem, Adonizedek (Judg. 10:1, 3); and suggests that he, too, was a native of Jerusalem before the city was captured. According to Mowinckel, whom Rowley cites with approval, 'Zadok was descended from the ancient race of priest kings of whom Melchizedek was a representative'.²⁷ In that context, verses 1-3 and verses 5-7 are spoken by Zadok to David – to whom he pledges allegiance; while verse 4 is spoken to Zadok – confirming his continuing role as priest in Jerusalem (cf. 1 Sam. 2:35). This suggestion has had some qualified support;²⁸ though in view of the lack of

²⁴ Bowker, 'Psalm CX', p. 36.

²⁵ H.H. Rowley, 'Melchizedek and Zadok', in *Festschrift, A. Bertholet* (Tubingen: Mohr, 1950), pp. 463-472 [471].

²⁶ See H.H. Rowley, 'Zadok and Nehushtan', *JBL* 58.2 (1939), pp. 113-141; idem, 'Melchizedek and Zadok'; see also Christian E. Hauer, 'Who was Zadok?', *JBL* 82.1 (1963), pp. 89-94, who suggests that Zadok's rapid rise to importance under David may have been due to complicity with the invaders, helping them to gain access to the apparently impregnable citadel.

²⁷ Mowinckel, *Psalms*, p. 133; Rowley, 'Zadok and Nehushtan', p. 123

²⁸ So, for example, Anderson regards Rowley's suggestion as 'plausible' and 'worth serious consideration' (*Psalms*, 2:767, 769); Clements describes it as 'a possibility that must be reckoned with'

evidence, de Vaux regards the thesis as ‘unfounded’.²⁹ Saul Olyan has argued convincingly against the view that Zadok was a Jebusite;³⁰ and most scholars take the whole psalm, including verse 4, to be addressed to the Davidic king.³¹

Philip Nel also emphasises on the link with the El Elyon cult in Jerusalem which in his view is implied by the reference to Melchizedek. Nel argues that the psalm is not intended to legitimate the cultic role of the Davidic king, but rather points to him as the ‘perpetuator of the ever-existing cult of El Elyon’.³² The promise to David of an everlasting dynasty in Psalm 132:11-12, which in that psalm is also linked with the election of Zion (vv. 13-16), is combined with the ideology of the cult of El Elyon, and this is focused in the designation of David as a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.

In the absence of any other unambiguous data, the prime evidence for the existence of a cult of El Elyon in Jerusalem must be the account of the meeting between Melchizedek, the king of Salem, and Abraham in Genesis 14:18-20.³³ Not only is Melchizedek referred to as a priest of El Elyon; but he also refers to El Elyon twice in his blessing. Abraham’s verbatim repetition of Melchizedek’s designation, *God Most High, maker of heaven and earth* (Gen. 14:19, 22) suggests that one aim of the passage is to demonstrate that the two men worship the same god; and the patriarch’s confession further identifies this God with Yahweh (v. 22). These verses contain four of the five occurrences of the full designation, El Elyon, in the Old Testament (the fifth is in Psa. 78:35); and if Salem can be

(*God and Temple*, p. 42), though notes that there is not enough evidence for any certainty; see also Rainer Albertz, *A History of the Religion of Israel in the Old Testament Period*, 2 vols. (London: SCM, 1994), 1:129-130. As noted above, Broyles notes the possibility that all of vv. 4-7 may be addressed to the priest (*Psalms*, p. 415).

²⁹ De Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, pp. 114, see also, pp. 373-374; Bowker, ‘Psalm CX’.

³⁰ Saul Olyan, ‘Zadok’s Origins and the Tribal Politics of David’, *JBL* 101.2 (1982), pp. 177-193. Olyan challenges the views of Rowley and Hauer that Zadok was a Jebusite – and claims instead that he was an Aaronide.

³¹ Michael Wilcox, *Psalms 73-150*, BST (Leicester: IVP, 2001), pp. 165-166, following Kissane and Briggs notes that in v. 5, ‘Lord’ translates **יְהוָה**, which, with a minor vowel change is the same word as in v. 1, and to be consistent should have the same referent, namely, the king. Thus he suggests that vv. 5-7 is addressed not to the king, but to Yahweh (about the king). However, the language of vv. 5-6 is more properly applied to Yahweh, particularly the reference to ‘the day of his wrath’. Also, being at someone’s right hand in battle generally implies offering strength and protection (e.g. Pss. 16:8; 109:31; 121:5; Isa. 63:12), and surely this is what Yahweh offers the king – not the other way round. Wilcox also points to the apparent inconsistency that in v. 1 the king is at Yahweh’s right hand, while in v. 5 Yahweh is at the king’s right hand; though this is not really an inconsistency; v. 1 indicates the king’s place of honour at Yahweh’s right hand, while v. 5 emphasises that it is Yahweh who gives the king his victory.

³² Nel, ‘Psalm 110’, p. 6

³³ The Genesis 14 narrative refers to Abram rather than Abraham; however, this paper also makes more general references to the patriarch, in which case Abraham is more appropriate. For consistency, therefore, I have referred to Abraham throughout.

identified with Jerusalem, we have firm evidence that the cult of El Elyon was prominent in the city – though it is less clear *when*. One view (argued, for example, by Nel) is that Psalm 110:4 reflects the older tradition; and Genesis 14:18-20, written later, represents an attempt to link Zion, and the cult of El Elyon, with the patriarchs, and so with Israel's earliest theological traditions. This would imply the existence of a prominent El Elyon cult in Jerusalem at the time of the city's capture. However, the evidence for this, as Nel himself admits,³⁴ is lacking.³⁵ Olyan points out that there is no indication of a sanctuary to El Elyon in the books of Samuel and Kings;³⁶ and this is surprising if, as Nel suggests, the Davidic king was installed as the perpetuator of the El Elyon cult. It is also surprising that there is no more than (at best) an implicit reference to El Elyon in Psalm 110. As already noted, the full designation, El Elyon, is rare in the Old Testament; though Elyon is referred to on a number of occasions, particularly in the Psalms – so why not in this one where a clear reference might be expected? Genesis 14:18-20 puts a significant emphasis on the relationship between Melchizedek and El Elyon; if Psalm 110 represents the primary tradition it is strange that it does not mention that relationship at all. This, together with the general lack of evidence for an El Elyon cult in Jerusalem at the time of David, makes it unlikely that the emphasis in Genesis 14:18-20 comes from that period. Why construct an event that links Abraham with something that appears to be of little or no significance at the time? It is therefore also unlikely that Psalm 110:4, with its lack of emphasis on El Elyon, reflects an earlier tradition than Genesis 14:18-20; and this paper will proceed on the basis that it is this latter passage that contains the earliest form of the Melchizedek tradition. The absence of an obvious alternative context in which the tradition might have arisen, makes the historicity of the encounter between Abraham and Melchizedek more likely;³⁷ though the identity of Melchizedek and the relationship between the cult of El Elyon and patriarchal worship remain problematic.³⁸ It is not

³⁴ Nel, 'Psalm 110', p. 5

³⁵ See also John G. Gammie, 'Loci of the Melchizedek Tradition of Genesis 14:18-20', *JBL* 90.4 (1971), pp. 385-396; Gammie points to the lack of names compounded with 'el' associated with Jerusalem and concludes that there is little evidence to support the view that Elyon was worshipped there (p. 389).

³⁶ Olyan, 'Zadok's Origins', p. 179.

³⁷ For further discussion of the historicity of Genesis 14:18-20, see, e.g., Loren R. Fisher, 'Abraham and his Priest-King', *JBL* 81.3 (1962), pp. 264-270; Gammie, 'Loci of the Melchizedek Tradition', pp. 385-386; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, pp. 318-320. If this is aetiology and the later link with El Elyon cannot be sustained, there would be no need to mention the name; thus the reference to El Elyon reinforces the historicity of the account – though to validate the blessing it would also be necessary to assert that El Elyon was the same God that Abraham worshipped.

³⁸ Regarding El Elyon and patriarchal worship, even recognising the historicity of the encounter, it is not impossible that the repetition that points to a clear identification of El Elyon with Abraham's God (and with Yahweh) is the contribution of the narrator rather than an accurate reporting of direct speech – though to legitimate the blessing pronounced by Melchizedek on Abraham, rather than a later El Elyon

certain, either, that Salem in Genesis 14 is Jerusalem;³⁹ though the identification is made clear in Psalm 76:2 and in later texts, such as the Genesis Apocryphon.⁴⁰ Our main interest here, however, is not the precise location of Salem in Genesis 14:18-20, but in the way the tradition is interpreted in Psalm 110:4;⁴¹ and since the city seems to provide the most likely connection between David and Melchizedek,⁴² it is probable that the identification of Salem with Jerusalem had been made by the time Psalm 110 was written. Genesis 14:18-20 thus provides both a prehistory linking David's new capital with Abraham, and also the basis for a link between David and Melchizedek. And, contrary to the views of Rowley, Nel and others, this is not in any way dependent on links with the Jebusite cult of El Elyon. This understanding of the way these traditions have influenced one another also avoids questionable views of the development of the relationship between Yahweh and Elyon.⁴³ There may well have been a Canaanite tradition linking Melchizedek with Jerusalem, but the reference in Psalm 110:4 is based on the Israelite tradition preserved in Genesis 14. It is possible, even probable, that the form of that narrative has been influenced by the later use of the tradition; in that case the narrator's use of repetition to identify Melchizedek's god with the God worshipped by Abraham, and also with Yahweh, might be to legitimate David's right to rule Jerusalem in the name of Yahweh – as the true heir of Melchizedek (who had also worshipped that same God).

cult in Jerusalem.

³⁹ We have already noted some objections to the identification of Salem with Jerusalem; for further discussion see, e.g., Fitzmyer, 'Now This Melchizedek', pp. 231-233; Gammie, 'Loci of the Melchizedek Tradition'; Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, pp. 409-411; Horton, *Melchizedek Tradition*, pp. 48-50; Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis*, OTL (London: SCM, 1972), p. 179; Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, p. 316.

⁴⁰ See, e.g., Fitzmyer, 'Now This Melchizedek', p. 240; Horton, *Melchizedek Tradition*, pp. 63-64; 'Melchizedek' in *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 2 vols. ed. by Lawrence H. Schiffman and James VanderKam, 1:535-537.

⁴¹ Whilst the OT does point to a relationship between Abraham and David, it is not clear how their respective traditions influenced one another. I have argued that in the reference to Melchizedek, the Abrahamic traditions precede the Davidic; though because they were written down later, the way the former are presented in the final form of the text may well have been influenced by the latter. This does not mean that Gen. 14:18-20 is unhistorical; but the form and emphasis of the narrative (and maybe even its inclusion in the Pentateuch), may have been influenced by the way the tradition came to be applied.

⁴² It could be claimed that Psalm 110 does not mention Jerusalem, and to claim this as the link between the Davidic king and Melchizedek rather than the cult of El Elyon is somewhat arbitrary. Against this charge the following may be noted: 1) the link with the cult of El Elyon also assumes a link with Jerusalem – and so reads two elements into Psalm 110, not just one; 2) the relationship between David and Jerusalem is abundantly clear from other parts of the OT and might very well be assumed even where there is no direct reference (as in Psa. 110); by contrast there is little or no evidence linking David with the cult of El Elyon, and so there is a greater need to make the connection explicit.

⁴³ See, e.g., O. Eissfeldt, 'El and Yahweh', *JSS* 1 (1956), pp. 25-37; Mark S. Smith, *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 139-145; G. Levi Della Vida, 'El Elyon in Genesis 14:18-20', *JBL* 63.1 (1944), pp. 1-9.

Another solution to the problem of how the Davidic king may be designated ‘a priest for ever’ is offered by Horton.⁴⁴ He argues that the king was not a priest in the same way as the Levites or Zadokites, and points to other occasions where the term ‘priest’ appears to be used in a non-cultic setting (e.g. 2 Sam. 8:16-18;⁴⁵ 20:23-26; 1 Kgs 4:2-5). He concludes that ‘the “priesthood” of Melchizedek assumed by the Davidic kings cannot be the cultic office of priest in the temple’,⁴⁶ and prefers an understanding along the lines of ‘chieftain’.⁴⁷ However, while the wider use of the term may be possible,⁴⁸ it does not make much sense in Psalm 110:4. If it is not the intention to pick up specifically on Melchizedek’s *priesthood*, then why not, for example, refer to the ruler as ‘a king forever in the order of Melchizedek’?⁴⁹ Where similar language is used in Psalm 132:11-12 – *the Lord swore an oath to David, a sure oath that he will not revoke: ‘One of your own descendants I will place on your throne ... their sons shall sit on your throne for ever and ever’* – the emphasis is on the enduring *kingship* of the Davidic dynasty; however, as that verse shows, such a statement can be made without any reference to Melchizedek. It is difficult to see how, in Psalm 110:4, such an unusual designation, appealing to a somewhat enigmatic figure, and reinforced by nothing less than a divine oath, cannot but be intentional.⁵⁰ Horton is right to recognise the difficulty; but his explanation is not convincing.

In order to overcome the difficulty of assigning a meaningful priestly role to the Davidic king, some scholars argue that Psalm 110 does not refer to the earthly monarch at all but, from the start, points to the Messiah. Certainly, the New Testament recognises the messianic character of the psalm,⁵¹ and the psalm’s ascription which links it to David, may also

⁴⁴ Horton, *Melchizedek Tradition*.

⁴⁵ Horton notes that in the LXX translation of 2 Sam. 8:18, the Hebrew, כֹּהֲנִים is translated οὐλάρχαι, which may indicate a secular function, rather than the usual word for ‘priests’, ἱερεῖς (*Melchizedek Tradition*, pp. 47-48); however in the Greek translation of Ps. 110:4 (LXX: 109:4), ἱερεῖς is used, and Horton’s argument might backfire – if the LXX does make the distinction in one passage, the fact that it is not made in another may be because the traditional view of priest is intended.

⁴⁶ Horton, *Melchizedek Tradition*, p. 48.

⁴⁷ This appears to be reflected in the Targum.

⁴⁸ For further discussion of the use of ‘priest’ in different contexts, see, e.g., Gordon J. Wenham, ‘Were David’s Sons Priests’, *ZAW* 87 (1975), pp. 79-82; see also Armerding, ‘Were David’s Sons Really Priests?’

⁴⁹ This same argument could be advanced against Goldingay’s suggestion that the designation is intended to reinforce David’s position as king by portraying him as heir of an ancient tradition that will last forever; see John Goldingay, *Israel’s Faith* (Downers Grove: IVP; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006), p. 217.

⁵⁰ One possible objection to this is that the psalm is using a standard Jebusite formula, which needs to be reinterpreted to make it applicable to Israel’s king. This cannot be substantiated or refuted directly; however it does seem unlikely that a formula in need of such a radical revision would carry much weight.

⁵¹ Matt. 22:43-45; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42; Acts 2:34; Heb. 5:6; 6:20; 7:17, 21.

indicate its messianic significance. Maarten Paul argues that Psalm 110:4 does point to the priestly role of the psalm's addressee. However, within the history of Israel there never was a king who was also a priest, and so the psalm cannot be addressed to a king of Israel. Rather, it must point forward to the future Messiah, who will combine the two offices, as Melchizedek had once done.⁵² He agrees with the view that in the Old Testament there is a clear distinction: kings, including the Messiah, are from the tribe of Judah, while priests are from the tribe of Levi. The Messiah's priesthood, therefore, cannot be according the usual priestly order; instead it is 'of the order of Melchizedek' – and so established by divine oath, rather than by dint of ancestry.⁵³ Paul's analysis of the priestly function of the king in Israel is, in my view, broadly correct: there was no Davidic king who also carried out the role traditionally associated with the priesthood. However, there are some objections to the view that it must, therefore, be addressed to the future Messiah. First, why is David (the presumed author of Psa. 110) looking for a figure who combines royal and priestly roles? Even if it is appropriate to speak of a 'messianic' hope in the early days of the Davidic monarchy, would such a hope be linked, also, with the priesthood? This link between the two anointed figures of king and priest does appear to be made later, in Zechariah 6:13-14, where the Branch, generally taken to refer to the Davidic Messiah, may be described as a 'priest on his throne';⁵⁴ and maybe also in Jeremiah 33:17, where the

⁵² Paul, 'Order of Melchizedek'; see also Maarten J. Paul, 'Melchizedek', in *Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, 4 vols., ed. by Willem A. VanGemeren (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996) 4:934-936; Barry C. Davis, 'Is Psalm 110 a Messianic Psalm?', *Bibliotheca Sacra* 157 (2000), pp. 160-173.

⁵³ Paul ('Order of Melchizedek', pp. 207-208) notes an excerpt from the Amarna letters from the king of Jerusalem, Abdu-Heba, who attributes his succession to the throne of Jerusalem to the king (presumably of Egypt) rather than to his parents: 'Seeing that, as far as I am concerned, neither my father nor my mother put me in this place, but the strong arm of the king brought me into my father's house', (William W. Hallo, ed., *The Context of Scripture*, 3 vols. [Leiden: Brill, 1997], 3:237; Bill T. Arnold and Bryan E. Beyer, eds., *Readings from the Ancient Near East: Primary Sources for Old Testament Study* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002], p. 166 [EA 286]; 'Consider Jerusalem! This neither my father nor my mother gave to me. The strong hand: of the king gave it to me', Arnold & Beyer, *Readings*, p. 167 [EA 287]). Paul's main point is that there is an alternative to hereditary succession, namely 'installation by one superior in rank' ('Order of Melchizedek', p. 207) – and that is what is in view in Psa. 110:4. He argues that when Melchizedek is referred to (in Heb. 7:13) as having 'no father or mother', this is to be understood in relation to his office: 'he did not have the right of kingship or priesthood on account of his descent' (ibid.). Horton uses the same text to argue that there was no dynastic succession in Jerusalem tracing its origin to Melchizedek (*Melchizedek Tradition*, pp. 39-42). However, this seems to be a rather selective reading of the text. Abdu-Heba states that he has been brought into his 'father's house', which does suggest dynastic succession. Certainly this was achieved by 'the strong arm of the king' – but that could mean that the king of Egypt enabled the succession of Abdu-Heba to his father's throne by helping to overcome any threats to it. The text as it stands does not necessarily rule out dynastic succession (contra Horton); and nor does it confirm an alternative method of appointment (contra Paul).

⁵⁴ Fitzmyer prefers the translation, 'there shall be a priest by his throne', continuing the reference to two figures, one royal, one priestly, in the earlier part of the book; see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The One Who is to Come* (Grand Rapids; Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2007), p. 172; however, see Joyce G. Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, TOTC (Leicester: IVP, 1972), pp. 136-137; Baldwin argues that 'he will be a priest

Branch may be understood to fulfil both the Davidic covenant and the (somewhat less clear) covenant with the Levites. It must be questioned, though, whether this would have been a prominent idea in the early days of the monarchy.⁵⁵ And it is therefore unlikely that this psalm is to be taken as referring, initially, to the Messiah – though it later came to be viewed that way.⁵⁶ A second, and primary, objection is that this interpretation does not answer my main concern that the reference to priesthood, whilst introduced in a particularly significant way, backed by divine oath, is at the same time without explanation and without any obvious relationship with the rest of the psalm.⁵⁷ If the king does not routinely exercise the role of priest, in what sense does the Messiah have such a role? If the intention is to emphasise the priestly character of the Messiah why is there no further discussion of that role? And, again, why is it only Melchizedek's priestly office that is mentioned? If the intention is to emphasise the Messiah's combined role of king and priest, why not do that when referring to Melchizedek in Psalm 110:4 (as the writer of Gen. 14:18-20 does)? Furthermore, in those passages that are taken to affirm the Messiah's priestly role, the link appears to be between the Davidic monarchy and the traditional, Levitical, priesthood; and that can be done without the need to refer to Melchizedek. So why is the reference necessary here? In the end, this interpretation, too, does not offer a convincing solution to the problems posed by the divine declaration in Psalm 110:4.

We have argued, so far, that Psalm 110:4 is addressed to the Davidic king. However, since the king did not generally function as a priest, the declaration is not about legitimating his priestly role. Nor is it related to the possible involvement of the king in the (Jebusite) cult of El Elyon in Jerusalem. If the king was not a priest, and the verse is not referring to his

on his throne' seems the most natural translation of the MT of Zec. 6:13; see also Paul, 'Order of Melchizedek', p. 199.

⁵⁵ However, see Martin J. Selman, 'Messianic Mysteries' in Philip E. Satterthwaite, Richard S. Hess and Gordon J. Wenham, eds., *The Lord's Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts* (Carlisle: Paternoster; Grand Rapids: Baker Books), pp. 281-302 [295-297]. In Selman's view 'the fact that anointed priests existed before anointed kings and that Israelite kings functioned in a priestly manner from the beginning of the monarchy suggests that priesthood belongs to the origin of the messianic concept' (p. 297). There is little to suggest the hope of a priestly messiah before the days of the monarchy; and it seems more likely that messianic expectation grew, originally, out of the hope for an ideal king – and that this was then linked with the other anointed office of priest.

⁵⁶ See, e.g., Allen, *Psalms 101-150*, p. 84; Anderson, *Psalms*, 2:767; Broyles, *Psalms*, pp. 414-416; Tremper Longman III, 'The Messiah: Explorations in the Law and Writings', in Stanley E. Porter, ed., *The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), pp. 13-34 [25-26]; Weiser, *Psalms*, pp. 692-694.

⁵⁷ Davis' suggestion that it may be to indicate that in the holy war described in Psalm 110, the Messiah's enemies will be slaughtered and brought to God as sacrifices ('Is Psalm 110 a Messianic Psalm?', p. 166) smacks of desperation; and the recourse to such speculation illustrates my point that there is little to link v. 4 with the rest of the psalm.

performance of regular priestly duties, it must refer, instead, to something more specific; and what that is must, in some way, be related to Melchizedek. And since it is very likely that Psalm 110:4 depends on the Melchizedek tradition reflected in Genesis 14:18-20, that passage must figure prominently in any discussion. We might also note the similarities, already mentioned, between Psalm 110:4 and Psalm 132:11-12. Both passages use the same expression (נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה) to refer to Yahweh's oath: the first referring to the Davidic king's priestly role; the second referring to the continuation of the Davidic dynasty; and in both passages that oath is irrevocable and refers to a lasting inheritance (though in these latter two cases the language in the psalms is not identical). This similarity suggests that the perpetuation of the Davidic line and the fulfilment of the king's priestly role are interrelated: he is 'a priest forever' because he is a king forever – and he fulfils his priestly function as part of his role as king. We turn now to consider what that function is – particularly in relation to the narrative in Genesis 14:18-20.

Several commentators note the significance of blessing in Genesis 14:18-20. The root occurs three times in two verses; and twice with Abraham as its object: the narrator first tells us that Melchizedek blessed Abraham; and this is then repeated in direct speech. Melchizedek then goes on to bless El Elyon as the one who gave Abraham victory over his enemies. Pronouncing blessing was not exclusively the domain of priests; it is nonetheless regarded as a priestly function; and in Genesis 14:18-20 it is related, primarily, to Melchizedek's designation as priest: *[Melchizedek] was a priest of God Most High and he blessed [Abram]* (Gen. 14:18-19). If, as I have tried to show, Psalm 110:4 specifically relates to this narrative, might not also the description of the king as a *priest ... in the order of Melchizedek* be related, primarily, to his role as a vehicle of divine blessing. Paul notes the view of Van der Ploeg, who relates the psalm to the Davidic king blessing the descendants of Abraham when they go to war.⁵⁸ An important objection to this is that the Davidic king is not described taking that role any more than he is seen fulfilling other priestly roles.⁵⁹ There are occasions, though, where the king is seen pronouncing a more general blessing on the people;⁶⁰ and in Psalm 72, the king's fulfilment of the Abrahamic promise as the one through whom all nations are blessed (v. 17b) must surely include being a means of blessing to Israel too (and that is

⁵⁸ Paul, 'Order of Melchizedek', pp. 200-201. The priest's statement in Deuteronomy 12:2-4, while not explicitly described as a 'blessing', may well give its content in the context of holy war – which also appears to be the context of Genesis 14:18-20 and Psalm 110.

⁵⁹ For further objections see Paul, 'Order of Melchizedek', pp. 200-202.

⁶⁰ E.g. 1 Kgs 8:14; 1 Chr. 16:2; this more general blessing is also linked with priests and Levites, Lev. 9:22-23; 2 Chr. 30:27.

certainly the emphasis of the rest of Psa. 72). It is in this more general sense, of being the vehicle through which Israel is blessed, that Psalm 110:4 might then refer to the king as a priest of the order of Melchizedek. That would include the blessing associated with assurance of Yahweh's presence in the context of holy war, which is closely linked with the special relationship between the king and Yahweh. This appears to be the specific context envisaged in Psalm 110, and thus verse 4 can be related to the rest of the passage. Viewing the Davidic king as the bestower of blessing may have particular significance following the capture of Jerusalem. With the establishment of the former Jebusite city as the political and religious capital of Israel, there may well be a need to reassure the people of the place of Jerusalem in God's purposes for the nation. By linking the king with Melchizedek, and particularly with his role as priest, which in the primary tradition is associated principally with blessing, the psalm points to David as the true heir of the former ruler of Jerusalem through whom the blessing pronounced by Melchizedek will continue to flow to the descendants of Abraham. Paul argues against limiting Melchizedek's priestly role; in his view, Melchizedek 'functioned completely as a priest',⁶¹ and it is arbitrary to separate out this one aspect of pronouncing blessing. However, whatever his actual priestly duties were, the emphasis of Genesis 14:18-20 is on blessing.⁶² It is as king, not priest, that he brought out bread and wine; and if he received a tithe from Abraham, notwithstanding the greater significance given to it by the writer to the Hebrews, that may be viewed, in this context, as no more than the customary response of one who has received a priestly blessing.⁶³ It is true that the term **מַעֲשֵׂר**, here translated 'tenth', almost always refers to the tithe offered to a priest (or to God), and it is unlikely that we should attach a different significance in this passage. However, the fact that who gave a tithe to whom is left unclear indicates that it is not of central importance in the narrative. Indeed, it seems possible that *in the order of* (or possibly 'in the manner of') *Melchizedek* might be suggesting just such a limitation: the Davidic king functions as a priest in the way we see Melchizedek functioning as a priest in Genesis 14:18-20, that is as a means of blessing (the descendants of) Abraham.

After I had presented this paper at the Biblical Studies Colloquium in Prague, a colleague, Rollin Grams, made the intriguing suggestion that the

⁶¹ Paul, 'Order of Melchizedek', p. 201.

⁶² This may in part look back on the promise in Genesis 12:1-3 – intentionally contrasting Melchizedek, who is generous towards Abraham, with the king of Sodom, who does not even extend required courtesy; and also contrasting the response of Abraham to the two kings.

⁶³ See Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, p. 317.

statement in Psalm 110:4 might have been a spontaneous outburst in the light of David's activity when the Ark was brought to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6). As we have noted, that seems to be the one occasion where David did take on a wider priestly role – offering sacrifices (vv. 13, 17-18) and even dressing in a priest's ephod (v. 14); and it is certainly possible that, on observing David the king dressing and acting also as a priest, in the setting of Jerusalem, traditional home of the legendary priest king Melchizedek, a poet might make such an exclamation – not to justify David's behaviour, but in the light of it. This might also explain why the statement seems unrelated to the rest of the psalm. Also significant is the emphasis in the passage on blessing. There is a double reference to Yahweh blessing the house of Obed-Edom because of the Ark (vv. 11-12), suggesting that at least part of David's purpose in transferring the Ark to Jerusalem was in order to bring divine blessing on the city. After offering sacrifices, David *blessed the people* (v. 18) before returning home to *bless his household* (v. 20).

It must be admitted that there is little to link Psalm 110 directly with the occasion of bringing the Ark to Jerusalem. Certainly the date is not entirely ruled out. As we have seen, Rowley sets the psalm against the background of David's conquest of Jerusalem, which is associated, too, with the presence of the Ark in the city. Other scholars, too, place the psalm early in the monarchy (though few as early as the time of David). We have also noted links between Psalm 110 and Psalm 132, which celebrates Yahweh's enthronement and is probably associated with a re-enactment of bringing the Ark to Jerusalem. However, Psalm 110 focuses on the enthronement of the king not of Yahweh, and there is nothing in the psalm that indicates the progression of the Ark into the city. Consequently, the psalm is unlikely to be directly associated with that event. That said, it is not impossible that, while pointing to David as the true heir of Melchizedek and as such the one through whom God's blessing flows to the people, the psalmist might also reflect on David's priestly role and the divine blessing that comes through him in 2 Samuel 6.

In this paper I have tried to interpret Psalm 110:4 in the light of the only other reference to Melchizedek in the Old Testament (Gen. 14:18-20), in order to understand the significance of the text within its Old Testament setting. In that context, the emphasis is on the Davidic king as a channel of divine blessing to the descendants of Abraham. In the light of the failure of the monarchy, this and other Royal Psalms took on a messianic significance, and that is developed in the New Testament, which relates the psalm to Christ. In line with this, the writer to the Hebrews applies Psalm 110:4 to Christ – emphasising in particular the eternal nature of Jesus'

priesthood. This is one particular way of reading Psalm 110 – emphasising its messianic significance and relating that to Christ. That blesses us. Another way of reading it is to draw out the theological principles within the text, and seek to apply the psalm to ourselves by focusing, for example, on the way God helps and uses those who, like David, he has called into his service. The context of Psalm 110 appears to be holy war, of God defeating the enemies that threaten the king and the well-being of his people; and that might not be directly applicable to our situation. However, we can emphasise the certainty of God's presence with us in the battles that we face, the promise of victory and vindication in the face of the evils that threaten the kingdom of God, and the hope of reigning with him in glory. That, too, blesses us. More particularly, in the light of the discussion of what it means to be a priest of the order of Melchizedek, we recognise that a key part of our calling (and in 1 Pet. 2:9 we are also described as priests) is to be a channel of God's blessing to the people of God (and to the world). Read in this way, the psalm not only blesses *us*, it also challenges us to live up to our calling to be a means by which the blessing of God flows to others.

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2

Praying the Blessing of Psalm 110: A Response

Andrew Dyck

The Psalms comprise the foremost prayer hymnal for both Jews and Christians. Christians particularly treasure Psalm 110. It is quoted at least eight times in the New Testament¹ – more frequently than any other psalm.² It also has a prominent place in Christian worship, having long been used in the Western Church as the ‘first psalm of vespers on Sundays [and as] a favorite reading for Ascension Day’.³ Psalm 110 has this prominence in both the New Testament and Christian liturgy because Christians worship Jesus as both king and high priest. The paper ‘Psalm 110, Melchizedek and David: blessing (the descendants of) Abraham’ by Robin Routledge therefore sheds light on a psalm that is both intriguing and significant. In response I will suggest some implications of Routledge’s research into Psalm 110:4.

I come to the Psalms as a Christian, a pastor and preacher in the Mennonite tradition, a worshipper and a spiritual director. Thus I ask, ‘How can Christians pray Psalm 110 in corporate worship and in individual communion with God?’ Verses 1-3 and 5-7 seem to be of one fabric; they address a ruler, speak of Yahweh, and describe a conquest over enemies. However, verse 4, with its solemn words about a priest like Melchizedek, seems unrelated to the preceding and succeeding verses. By addressing the important matter of relating verse 4 to the rest of the Psalm, Routledge contributes towards answering my question.

Routledge’s approach is to consider first the reason for naming the hearer (presumably a Davidic king) priest, and second the relationship between Psalm 110 and the Genesis 14 account of Melchizedek. Routledge presents five options for explaining how it is that the king is named priest. 1) During the Hasmonean reign the king was also a priest. 2) King David performed a priestly role. 3) Yahweh and Jebusite myths became fused; therefore verse 4 may have been addressed to Zadok, a Jebusite priest, instead of to King David. 4) The word ‘priest’ can also be translated

¹ Matthew 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42-43; Acts 2:34-35; Hebrews 1:13, 5:6, 7:17, 21; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:25; Hebrews 5:10.

² James Limburg, ed., *Psalms*, Patrick D. Miller and David L. Bartlett, Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), p. 379.

³ James H. Waltner, ed., *Psalms*, Elmer A. Martens and Douglas B. Miller, Believers Church Bible Commentary (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 2006), p. 540.

‘chieftain’. 5) This is a messianic prophecy, not addressed to an earthly Jewish king. Routledge then rules out each explanation based on its lack of sufficient evidence and/or its improbability. For example, explanations from the Hasmonean era are unlikely because Psalm 110 was undoubtedly written at an earlier time;⁴ the rare occasions when David performed a priestly role are disproportionate to the emphasis given to this function in Psalm 110;⁵ there is insufficient evidence to support the presence of the Jebusites’ El Elyon cult in Jerusalem at the time of David’s conquest;⁶ although ‘chieftain’ might be an acceptable translation in place of ‘priest’, its usage would be illogical in light of the emphasis on Melchizedek (‘king’ would then be more logical);⁷ and there is no apparent reason why King David would have been looking forward to a messiah who was both royal and priestly.⁸ (Maartin J. Paul argues that the messiah-priest-king is like Melchizedek of Genesis 14 because he receives his priestly assignment by divine oath rather than by ancestral lineage.⁹ Paul’s argument may warrant further consideration than Routledge gives it – not only because it might give credence to option 5, but also because it offers a basis for defending the priestly role of David who was not from the tribe of Levi.)

Drawing on Genesis 14 as the basis for the psalm, and arguing that because Melchizedek’s primary role was to bless Abraham, Routledge then presents what he thinks is the best explanation for calling the king a priest: namely, that the king is given the priestly role of blessing the people. The Davidic king is Melchizedek’s heir because he blesses the people in the way that Melchizedek once blessed Abraham. To paraphrase slightly, ‘Yahweh has sworn and will not change his mind / you are a “bless-er” forever according to the order of Melchizedek.’ (Routledge’s explanation could be strengthened with further indications that the act of blessing is a *sufficient* definition of being a priest, and that the act of blessing was the *sole* way in which Melchizedek was a priest.¹⁰)

Returning to the question ‘How shall Christians pray this psalm?’, the conclusion of Routledge’s paper suggests a refinement of this question: ‘How does the king’s priestly function of bestowing blessing shape the way Christians pray this psalm?’.

⁴ Routledge, p. 4.

⁵ Ibid., p. 6.

⁶ Ibid., p. 9.

⁷ Ibid., p. 10.

⁸ Ibid., p. 11.

⁹ Maartin J. Paul, ‘The Order of Melchizedek’, *Westminster Theological Journal* 49, no. 1 (1987), pp. 208-209.

¹⁰ For instance, on what basis can it be said that offering bread and wine, and receiving (or giving) a tithe are not also priestly functions?

Routledge's conclusion that the Davidic king is to bless the people fits well with the Bible's trajectory of blessing; the Scriptures repeatedly point out humanity's divinely given assignment to bless the world. God gave this assignment of blessing to Adam and Eve, who were to fill the earth and rule over it as God's regents (Gen. 1:26-28). God promised to bless all nations in Abraham (Gen. 12:3b). Isaiah prophesied that all nations would come to be blessed at Zion (Isaiah 2:3; cf. Isaiah 49). Jesus told Nicodemus that God so loved the world that he blessed it by giving his Son (John 3:16). Paul wrote that in Christ all things and all people would be gathered together in blessed unity (Ephesians 1:9-10, 2:14, 3:5-6). God's solemn oath that the Davidic king will be a blessing forever fits into this trajectory.

That being so, what is the specific blessing in Psalm 110? Routledge mentions two writers who suggest that the king bestows blessing for war. Philip Nel writes that the blessing relates to submission of enemies.¹¹ J. P. M. Van der Ploeg writes that the blessing is for the nation's troops as they go to war.¹² Although David offered other blessings for his people ('e.g. 1 Kings 8:14; 1 Chronicles 16:2'),¹³ understanding Psalm 110 as a Davidic king blessing his troops seems reasonable given the war-like tone of the rest of the psalm.

If Psalm 110 does represent an important blessing that is to be given by the Davidic king, several questions rush to my mind. Is he then a chaplain for Yahweh's army, and a model for Christians praying in preparation for war? Should Christians use this psalm to pray that their enemies will be subdued? Does this psalm justify Christians of any nation blessing their troops when they go to war?

Some Christians have prayed in this way. The movie *Joyeux Noel* portrays the first Christmas of World War I. In an early scene a Scottish chaplain addresses the troops with just such a blessing:

Bishop: Christ our Lord said, 'Think not that I come to bring peace on earth. I come not to bring peace, but a sword.' The Gospel according to St. Matthew. Well, my brethren, the sword of the Lord is in your hands. You are the very defenders of civilization itself. The forces of good against the forces of evil. For this war is indeed a crusade! A holy war to save the freedom of the world. In truth I tell you: the Germans do not act like us, neither do they think like us, for they are not, like us, children of God. Are those who shell cities populated only by civilians the children

¹¹ Philip J. Nel, 'Psalm 110 and the Melchizedek Tradition', *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 22, no. 1 (1996). Quoted in Routledge, p. 2.

¹² J.P.M. van der Ploeg, *Psalmen Boeken van het OT* (Roermond/Maaseik: Romen, 1974) 2, p. 248. Quoted in Paul, 'The Order of Melchizedek', p. 201, and Routledge, p. 9.

¹³ Routledge, p. 14.

of God? Are those who advanced armed hiding behind women and children the children of God? With God's help, you must kill the Germans, good or bad, young or old. Kill every one of them so that it won't have to be done again. The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

Bishop: May God Almighty bless you. The Father, the Son the Holy Ghost. Amen,

All: Amen.¹⁴

This model of prayer is unsatisfactory. This picture of a kingly chaplain blessing his troops for holy war is at odds with scripture's larger theme of blessing all the nations. It is also at odds with the convictions of my Mennonite Christian tradition.

So I am compelled to pursue Routledge's research question further – not only considering how the priestly function of verse 4 is related to the kingly function of verses 1-3 and 5-7, but also considering the details of the priestly blessing in verse 4 in light of the complete psalm. More specifically, who are the blessing's recipients? What is the blessing's purpose? What is the blessing's motivation?

Two lenses can bring focus to the specific blessing in Psalm 110. One lens is Psalm 110's historical and canonic settings. The other lens is Walter Brueggemann's paradigm of orientation, disorientation and new orientation in the Psalms.¹⁵

According to the superscription, the psalm is meant to be associated with King David. (The phrase 'of David' does not necessarily mean that the psalm was written *by* David. Psalm 110 seems to be addressed *to* David, and thus could have been written by someone close to David.) In this historical setting, King David is not specifically commanded to go to war. Rather, David is instructed to sit and wait until Yahweh places the enemy under David's feet. Yahweh will advance David's sceptre, so that David may rule (v 2). The Lord is the one who will shatter kings and execute nations (v 5-7) – not just within Jerusalem's domain, but globally.

Thus, in keeping with Millard Lind's theological study of warfare in ancient Israel, this psalm calls David to walk in the manner of Israel's ancient leaders (e.g. Moses and Joshua), for whom God was their commander-in-chief.¹⁶ David is to let God conquer Israel's enemies

¹⁴ 'Memorable Quotes for *Joyeux Noël* (2005)', <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0424205/quotes> (accessed 17 January 2009).

¹⁵ Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), p. 19.

¹⁶ Millard C. Lind, *Yahweh Is a Warrior: The Theology of Warfare in Ancient Israel* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1980.), pp. 106-108, 141-142, 144, 172.

without superiority of might or technology, but by faith and through divine acts. This was the manner in which David killed Goliath using only a stone (1 Sam. 17:38-51) and depending on Yahweh; but not, as Lind points out, the manner in which David later depended which was the more typical Near Eastern technologies and strategies of a professional army (2 Sam. 11:1, 12:26-31) and a census (2 Sam. 24).¹⁷

The historical Davidic context suggests that this psalm calls the king-priest to bless the people by trusting Yahweh to deal with enemies, not by using conventional methods of waging war. If holy war is the setting for this psalm, then the king-priest is being called to an atypical view and method of such war.

The psalm's canonic setting also suggests the specifics of the priestly blessing that the king is to give. Bruce Waltke characterises Book V of the Psalms as a post-exilic compilation that includes two sets of Davidic psalms, 108-110 and 138-145.¹⁸ God's people were scattered: some remained in Babylon; others had resettled in Jerusalem. Seeking a new hope in God, they recollected David as 'the "wise man" who...relies wholly on the steadfast love of YHWH'.¹⁹ Their only hope was in Yahweh, not in kings or rulers. In this post-exilic context the messianic hope grew that God would send an anointed repre – who would rule the whole earth and crush all the rebellious. This is reminiscent of latter Isaiah,²⁰ also post-exilic, who offered hope for a time when all peoples will flock to Jerusalem to come to God. On that day God would ultimately bless all peoples through Abraham's descendents.

According to Psalm 110's canonic setting, the anticipated David would be an anointed representative of Yahweh the victor; this future king would bless the people like a priest, and would even bless all the world's peoples.

If the historical context calls the Davidic king to bless the people of Israel by relying on Yahweh to deal with enemies instead of relying on troop numbers, chariot technology and censuses, then the king-priest blesses the people with faith, not simply war. If the canonic context anticipates a day when Yahweh's anointed representative will inaugurate God's rule of judgment and mercy, then the future king-priest blesses the people with hope, not simply war. Verse 4 of Psalm 110 thus indicates a

¹⁷ Ibid., 118.

¹⁸ Bruce Waltke, 'Biblical Theology: Old Testament' (lecture notes, Regent College, Vancouver, 27 February 1996), p. 100.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ E.g. Isaiah 49:6-7, 55:5, 60:11.

blessing with faith and hope, rather than a blessing with a simple commission for holy war crusaders.

Walter Brueggemann's work supports this line of thinking as well. Brueggemann has demonstrated that the Psalms typically communicate orientation, disorientation, new orientation, or a movement through these experiences.²¹ An initial glance at Psalm 110 using the Davidic context suggests that this psalm communicates orientation; it seems to support the nation's status quo: 'David, our king, has Yahweh at his right hand; and so he blesses us in war against our enemies'. Things are as they should be.

But in light of this psalm's historic context, it can also be heard as a prophetic message meant to reorient the king: 'Return to your seat as Yahweh's representative. Remember that Yahweh did not intend for Israel to have a king (1 Sam. 8:4-8). You are Yahweh's representative, not Yahweh's replacement. So trust in Yahweh, not in your troops.' Furthermore, in light of its canonic context, this hymn offers post-exilic worshippers ongoing reorientation: 'Hope for a king-priest like Melchizedek—like the ideal David. Hope for God's judgment and vindication. Hope for blessing for yourselves, and for all those flocking to the holy mountains.'²²

Using Brueggemann's categorisation, verse 4 does not simply support a status quo orientation, in which the king blesses the crusaders going to battle. Rather, the blessing is a call to a new orientation. The Davidic king is reoriented to trust in Yahweh for victory (and such trust would surely be a blessing for the people). The kingless people after the exile are reoriented towards a future anointed king who will bless the people with hope in Yahweh for judgment and fulfilment.

If this royal psalm with its enigmatic vs. 4 has been given to Christians for their prayers in community worship and in closeted communion with God, then I think that they go astray if they use this psalm as justification for praying divine blessing on conquests over flesh and blood enemies (cf. Eph. 6:12), whether those enemies are economic competitors or armed terrorists. Instead, this psalm is a prayer of faith in Yahweh and a prayer of hope for the Day of the Lord. This blessing is not a blessing over troops, but over true Israelites. At its core, this blessing is not about military conquest, but about trust in the Almighty. This blessing does not motivate believers to fight, but motivates them to hope and to trust.

How can Christians pray Psalm 110, and especially its priestly blessing in verse 4? I suggest that they pray this psalm for leaders,

²¹ Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary*, p. 19.

²² In keeping with the NRSV's translation of the difficult vs. 3.

organisers, and politicians that in all their work they will heed the Divine Leader, will learn the posture of sitting and waiting in faith, and will hope in what God has in store for the world.

I suggest that Christians continue to pray this psalm in praise of Jesus Christ their kingly priest. Jesus has demonstrated that the way of victory over the powers is by dying – that is, by waiting on Yahweh. Jesus has promised to return with vindication and blessing.

I suggest that Christians pray Psalm 110 for themselves, in the manner of Melchizedek's blessing. In keeping with Genesis 14, they can pray that they themselves will learn how to entrust their lives as tithes to their Melchizedek-Jesus, who promises to bless them with banquet fare of bread and wine.

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3

Observations on the Songs of Ascents: A discussion about the so-called Zion-theology of Psalms 120-134

Michael Rohde

At the Colloquium Biblicum Lovaniense 2008, participants were witnesses of a redaction history *in miniature*, as the opening lecture had been announced with the title ‘From exegesis of the psalms *to* an exegesis of the Psalter’ but was eventually held with the title ‘Exegesis of the psalms *and* exegesis of the Psalter’. The exegesis of the Psalter is not intended to *replace* the careful interpretation of the individual psalms, but to *complement* these through observations on the composition of the psalms.

Psalms 120-134 are bound together in their present form through their common heading ‘songs of ascents’ or ‘pilgrimage psalms’. Latest at the time when the headings of Psalms were edited, these individual psalms were understood to comprise a collection and there are reasonable assumptions that the pilgrimage Psalter was even passed on as a separate tradition before being incorporated into the complete Psalter.¹ Usually groups of psalms are characterised according to observations on their headings, form-critical attributes, connections of keywords and literary-critical and redaction-historical considerations. In the German exegesis, conceptions of Klaus Seybold (1978) and Erich Zenger (2008) have been most influential. Klaus Seybold has reconstructed a redaction history in his ‘Studies on the history of development of Psalms 120 – 134’ and has described a theological profile. Accordingly the pilgrimage psalms, prayers and songs owe their being to lay-people from a peasant background, who originated from the post-exilic Diaspora or the fringes of Israel. A later, official theology gathered the psalms and understood them in a cultic manner, shaping the psalms through its Zion-theology into an orthodox framework. The essential notions were thus: the presence of Yahweh on Zion, the blessing of Yahweh from Zion, Israel as community around Zion.²

The Commentary on Psalms 120 – 134 by Erich Zenger which appeared in 2008 in the Herder Theological Commentary Series³ offers an

¹ Klaus Seybold, *Die Wallfahrtspsalmen. Studien zur Entstehungsgeschichte von Psalm 120-134*, BThS 3 (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1978), p. 84 describes this collection as ‘vade mecum’ of Zion visitors.

² Ibid., p. 83.

³ Frank-Lothar Hossfeld/Erich Zenger, *Die Psalmen 101-150*, HThKAT (Freiburg i.B., 2008).

extensive analysis and commentary on the individual psalms as well as thoughts on the function of each psalm within the composition of the Psalter. A particular emphasis of Zenger lies with the question of the composition with the connections between the keywords and the so-called Zion-theology.

Using the example of the group of psalms Ps. 120-134 the following contribution will critically examine if the prejudice can at least partially be justified that exegesis of the Psalter results in cooking a fruit-pulp ('Früchtemus', see Erhard S. Gerstenberger). With the pilgrimage psalms we can easily gain the impression that all too often many individual pieces of fruit can be extensively inspected and the variety of possibilities of considering them can be weighed up, but in the end the fruits are all cooked together. Because of a particular, dominant flavour the marmalade then receives one common label, called 'Zion-theology'. Less metaphorically, this article seeks to examine critically how much 'Zion' is contained in the pilgrimage psalms. For this aim we shall gather our own observations on the theological profile of Psalms 120-134. In the first instance we shall ask about the perspective of the speaker, of the occurrence of motifs and thoughts of Zion-theology, of the terms used for the audience and of the theological emphasis of the picture or pictures of God respectively. Literary critical considerations do not stand in the foreground, but are not completely excluded. It will be examined to what extent we can speak of Zion-theology linking the psalms in their final text forms, or if Zion-theology represents a conceptual idea, which so influences the reading of the individual texts that the above mentioned phenomenon of labelling eventuates. The so-called pilgrimage psalms are examined in a threefold division of five psalms.⁴

On Ps 120 – 124

The two opening verses of **Ps 120** address YHWH explicitly. The call to God and the plea for help are emphasised in verse 1 in an inverted verbal sentence, whereby the address to God and the distress of the speaker emphatically precede the calling of the petitioner. The repeated calling on the name of God as an address before the plea for rescue underlines the *JHWH-centred structure* of the two verses. Ps 120 remains in the speaker's perspective the view of a single person. The 'my soul' in verses 2 and 6 constitute an internal keyword bracketing the psalm. Verses 3-7 are continuously defined by the altercation of the petitioner with his enemies,

⁴ The expression יִמְאֲרֵנָה יִשְׂרָאֵל ('let Israel say') appears in 124:1 and 129:1 and is trustworthy evidence for the possibility to talk about a tripartite division of Psalms 120-134 (three groups of five). At the end of each one the summons is repeated.

which has its climax both rhetorically and substantially in the confrontation in verse 7. The 'I' of the petitioner and the 'they' of the enemies confront each other in the figures of 'peace' and 'war'.

Together with Zenger, the topographical statements go beyond their specific location – in the extreme north and extreme south – to frontier areas of the then-known world⁵ which on a horizontal level should be understood as worldview representations which evoke the dangerous 'edges' of the world of that time.

It does not appear to have been satisfactorily explained that these pieces of information are to be thought of not only as describing the *existential* condition of the petitioner, but also 'symbolize the infinite separation from Zion as the centre of life of the Israelite worldview'.⁶ Considered on its own, it is not possible to discern a Zion-perspective in Ps 120. The idea of 'calling' to God for help and of His 'answering' are not *per se* bound to a particular location. With v. 5 mention is made of the petitioner's existence in the Diaspora or more fundamentally his experiences of life in a foreign land, which are characterised by lack of peace. Zenger reckons that v. 6 already assumes that the petitioner is orienting himself anew and is coming to seek 'Jerusalem, the city of peace'. This new movement is exactly an 'apt opening psalm for the pilgrimage Psalter'.⁷ The horizontal alignment of Psalm 120 speaks against this understanding, for Psalm 120 does not give any hint, from the goal or at least the area in which the seeker is searching, of what *towards* Zion should mean. If the hatred of mankind and their inclination towards war are named as problems, then the appropriate solution would be love and peace rather than a ritual pilgrimage to a holy site. The movement to Zion would be, to put it pointedly, not salvation but a flight into another world – to another place on the map, instead of being an experience of help received at the place of affliction. Zenger goes so far as to speak of a real and prayerful movement of the soul, which is told in a narrative-dramatic manner in the pair of psalms 120 – 121. This ambiguity must be scrutinised.

Ps 120 is theologically unusual in as far as the petition to God is placed before the description of the need, and in that the psalm does not have a liturgical heading or a formulaic end, but remains the description of the situation – the individual in confrontation with his enemies. In the beginning of Ps 120 one can understand the verbs of the AK as retrospection, admittedly not so much as a 'song of gratitude', as Seybold and Weber have considered, but rather as a prayer of petition in an unusual

⁵ Zenger, p. 420.

⁶ Ibid., p. 421.

⁷ Ibid., p. 422.

sequence of certainty of hearing, plea and grievance.⁸ Ps 120 is open-ended, so that the redaction-critical reflection that it could be about a literary composition for a group of psalms or at least for the neighbouring psalm is understandable. How convincing this hypothesis is must yet be proven. The use of the personal pronoun at the end of a psalm is nowhere else to be found in this combination. The explicit ‘they’ (הֵמָּה) is found only here in Psalms 120-150. The written form ‘I’ is only found in Ps 135:5 and 143:12 in this group. Ps 135:5 uses it in the formula of knowing ‘I know that YHWH is great ...’. Ps 143:12 is similar to our verse, as it is the last verse of the psalm and has the theme of opposites of the petitioner and enemies. 143:12 is a direct plea for salvation from enemies, with the reason given as ‘for I am your servant’. The contrast of אֲנִי and הֵמָּה in 120:7 is therefore extraordinary from a rhetorical point of view. The impression of the *contrast* between the perspectives of the petitioner and his enemies could not be formulated more clearly. Thus Ps 120 can be read as an individual psalm, so that the last verse of Ps 120 stresses the need of the petitioner and also his certainty that he will be rescued from it – so that the petitioner prays in this certainty. A decisive bracketing of 120:7 with v. 2 is present, in that the war metaphor of v. 7 is linked with the verb of *telling*, just as the need of the hard-pressed soul in v. 2 is exemplified by the lying lips and the tongue of falsehood (v. 2,3). If the answer to the question of war and peace does not lie in use of force and destruction of the enemy, but in ways of negotiation in the setting of Ps 120, then peace through God’s intervention is conceivable at that particular place and does not need to be looked for far away. This peace then sets the petitioner in a real sense in motion. He knows that God is within hearing distance, so that he can hear the answer and can experience his rescue in a far off country.

Ps 120 to 121 are in no way closely linked on a *semantic* level.⁹ **Ps 121** uses different language. The lifted eyes may evoke the keeping watch toward the place of help and of the helper.¹⁰ The petitioner sets himself in *motion* (eventually: starts on a journey), when he speaks of mountains, feet, sun and moon. Equally though, the words mountains, sun and moon evoke hostile dangers, powers or even gods, against whom YHWH acts as an alert provider, giver of shadow and protection. In Ps 121 there is not yet an *unfolding* Zion-theology, at most there is a hint of it. The ‘mountains’ can be thought of as the mountains of Zion and therefore allude to God who is thought of as being present on Mount Zion. Ps 133:3 speaks explicitly of the ‘mountains of Zion’ so that the plural form need not disturb us. It is not

⁸ Ibid., p. 413.

⁹ Ibid., p. 447: ‘Even though they are not connected by explicit keyword similarities, they relate to each other through their worldview concepts.’

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 436.

necessary to understand the mountains as Mount Zion, so that Zenger names the alternatives honestly, in which the mountains refer to Israel (Delitzsch), the mountains of the gods (as polemic of the gods; Kraus; Schmidt), or mean YHWH himself, as expression of the power of God or a rough place of God, who lives in heaven above the mountains (Eißfeldt; Volz). Ps 125:2 names mountains which *surround* Jerusalem (הרים סביב לה). Ps 121 paints a picture of God who is present as the praying pilgrim travels, he is a God who accompanies. This God is not just a god who can be experienced mainly or only in *one* place, but one who is already there during the journey, night and day, and whose providing care accompanies the pilgrim on all sides. Ps 121:2 reckons firmly with help from the universal YHWH – who qualifies by being the creator God of the *creatio continua* – and not just by arrival at a particular place. This characterises the raising of the eyes less as longing, more as fear of danger. Naturally we should not confuse the mountains of Palestine with the Alps, as Rose and Zenger point out, but for that reason to regard the mountain metaphor as not indicating a dangerous place is not convincing. Zenger's argument, that the phrase נשא עיניו means *fixing the eyes on something*, and that we should understand this as *looking with great longing, not in fear*, carries more weight.

The formulation נשא עיניו in Ps 123 is *equivocal*. The company of prayers is spoken by an individual and the collective perspective of their eyes which are directed to YHWH. In v. 1 the one who is being gazed at is described as 'living in heaven'. The look directed to YHWH is equivocally compared to a slave's look at his master and of a maid's look at her mistress (v. 2). The 'hand' of the master is being watched – this hand can stand for authority or punishment but can also signify favour and protection. So the look is polyvalent too. The worshippers compare themselves with dependent and vulnerable people, who wish to experience God not only as their master but also as their protector. The mighty one, the God of heaven, should show them His mercy, as the phrase 'till he shows us his mercy' (v. 2) and the repeated request in Ps 123:3 'Have mercy on us, YHWH, have mercy' shows. The request for favour is based on the depiction of the hardship. Contempt (בזי) and ridicule (לעג) imply degradation and antisocial behaviour against the weak.¹¹ The petitioners of Ps 123 are looking for succour from the one to whom they are directing their eyes. The *mountains*, which have already been in view in Ps 121, are not expected to deliver this aid, but we are told in the trusting confession that 'My help comes from YHWH, the maker of heaven and earth'. It is the look to *heaven*, which awakens hope in the petitioner of Ps 121 and 123,

¹¹ Ibid., p. 472.

rather than the look to the mountains. The pilgrim of Ps 121 is on his way through the mountains, or at least it is so imagined. *Externally* he has the view of the mountains before him, *internally* he is looking to YHWH from whom he is expecting help. The direction of Zion is not yet implicit in Ps 121; rather the direction is towards the mighty God of creation, who can rescue out of danger in foreign parts and on the journey. By the way, Ps 123 ends in a similar manner as Ps 120 with the unfolding of the depiction of the need. The word רבת (too long) appears four times in Psalms 120-134 (120:6; 123:4; 129:1,2) and indicates the petitioner's degree of suffering. His soul has already had to endure the hatred and the warmongering of the others for a long time; the 'we' / 'Our souls' of Ps 123 have long endured the contempt and ridicule of the proud and arrogant. Thus, the description of the emergency stands at the end of Ps 123 and Ps 120 and is primarily expressed in terms of verbal hostilities, and is the reason for calling and looking to God.

Ps 124 places the description of need at the beginning with the formulation לולי יהוה as an *irrealis* conditional phrase, which only appears here in Psalms 120-150.¹² The expressions used for the hostilities are warlike (attacked) here and use the metaphors of wild animals and engulfing floods. The threat seems to be more severe than in Ps 120, 121 and 123, and borders on death itself. The petitioners would have been eaten alive (124:3a), the description 'alive' is stressed here, the anger of men flared up against them (v. 3b) and the water, which was already up to their necks, would have risen even further (124:4-5) had YHWH not proven himself to be the one who was with the petitioners. God is depicted in Ps 124 as sovereign over the enemies of humans and over the powers of nature; he is present and thus prevents the worst from happening. Viewed from a literary standpoint, verses 2 and 3 show an artistic density, manifested in similar syntax by means of the twofold use of the infinitive construct with Be and the fourfold use of the plural suffixes in עֲלִינוּ לָנוּ בְנוּ בְלַנְעֵנוּ. Verses 4 and 5 are woven together chiasmatically and use the same vocabulary such as נַפְשֵׁנוּ עָבַר הַיָּמִים.

Ps 124:6 thanks God using the metaphor of a wild animal for His saving intervention. What God did *not* do is the occasion for worshipping Him. Theologically a *monistic* view is shown that humans – even if they are as dangerous as the fangs of wild animals – can achieve nothing without God's permission and that Israel's condition could have had a

¹² See Seybold, p. 41. Seybold points to foreign influences and lists Acadian parallels.

different result, still given from YHWH. Israel's condition is given by God – so that only He can grant survival.¹³

With one verse, 124:7, God's rescue is highlighted by showing how desperate the petitioners' affliction was, and how God acted for them. They were already caught up in the fowler's snare, that is, they were helplessly subject to the threat of death, but God let them escape *extra nos pro nobis*. Only the snare was destroyed, 'and we have escaped'.

Ps 124 does not contain any evidence for an explicit Zion-theology. YHWH is central; He is named at the beginning of both parts of the psalm. The end of the psalm shows the God who controls *history* to be the *creator*. For Zenger, the compositional conception of Ps 120-124 is sufficient for him to regard the psalms around Ps 122 as being about the God of Zion. If Ps 122 emerges to be the theological centre of the group of five psalms, it is imperative that this be respected. This does not, however, belie the fact that in Ps 120-121 and 123-124 *themselves* there is no explicit reference to Zion. The 'mountains' of Ps 121:2 have already been discussed as an exception.

Ps 122 may be correctly described as a 'theology of the city of Jerusalem'.¹⁴ The playful, onomatopoeic, probably folk-etymological connection of the thrice-mentioned names of the city (v. 2,3,6) and the threefold *shalom* in verses 6-8 give a hint of this. Our attention is attracted, theologically, to the fact that in the neighbouring psalms 120-121 and 123-124 the *name of God* occurs as both an independent subject and object. Ps 122 does not strictly speak of YHWH, but of his *place*. The 'house' (בית) of YHWH of 122:1b and 9a makes up the framework for this. In the middle verse 5b reminds us of the dynastic promise for the house of David, which is bound together with this place. The joy of the worshipper does not lie in sustenance in affliction or rescue from danger – those are the themes of the neighbouring psalms – but in the fact that he hears the call to approach the *house of YHWH*. Jerusalem has a cultic function, being the place in which the tribes of Yah had already gathered to worship. The middle section of the psalm mentions the traditional significance of the place, which was formative for cult and political life.¹⁵ The one instance of praying evokes praise and being enthroned.

¹³ See Zenger, p. 483: 'Possibly there is an implicit allusion to the prophetic and deuteronomic historical theology, according to which Israel's historical catastrophes are presented as YHWH's just actions toward his faithless people. At the same time our Psalm underlines: In these catastrophes YHWH has saved his people from destruction because he "has not let us be torn by their teeth".'

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 453.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 454. Zenger also mentions the cosmic ('well compacted city') and the societal and political dimension ('residence of the Davidic kingdom, living space for many persons of various professions, economic and cultural centre').

The end section differs significantly from the neighbouring psalms. Those spoke of the concluding, lamenting description of the hardships (Ps 120) and the present and general thanksgiving for the rescue from danger (Ps 124), the confession of YHWH as protector (Ps 121) and the plea that He should show Himself as protector to be merciful in the face of hardship (Ps 123), so here Ps 122 gives summons to wish good fortune on *Jerusalem*. The focus is not on humans in their need before God or on God in his mighty deeds in favour of humans, but on the *city* of Jerusalem itself. The wishes for a peaceful future for Jerusalem affect the worshipper to the extent that he sees himself as summoned to bestow peace on Jerusalem for the sake of his brothers and friends (122:8). Those who love Jerusalem shall live in peace (v. 6b).¹⁶ The love in 122:6 is conspicuously not towards the *God* of Jerusalem but toward the addressed *city* itself. The conclusion of the psalm leaves us in no doubt that it is about the Bet YHWH's, when the worshipper is praying for the good of Jerusalem (v. 9). The temple as house of YHWH is not primarily imagined to be the architectural edifice, but as 'home for the people' (Spieckermann).¹⁷

Ps 122 is immediately surrounded by psalms which speak of the hardships and afflictions of the petitioner, in dramatic metaphors, which on occasion express mortal danger. Ps 122 itself speaks of joy and peace and makes Jerusalem a *place of security and safety*. The worshipper speaks conspicuously as a member of a fellowship – and not just as an individual as in the neighbouring psalms.

With v. 1b-2 Ps 122 receives its direction of movement through the summons to a pilgrimage. The feet are standing in the gates of Jerusalem. The direction of the feet in Ps 121 was much more vague; it was more about a general experiencing of God's protection while being underway. Ps 122 speaks of the joy experienced at imagining standing in the gates of Jerusalem. The psalm surely assumes thereby a past experience of reaching Jerusalem; it can reproduce an internal movement throughout, even from a distance, by wishing peace upon Jerusalem.

The temple in Ps 122 appears to be a *socialised temple* – the *community* of worshippers, as well as the imagined pilgrim, and the effects

¹⁶ A conjecture is not necessary and not quite appropriate from external evidence.

¹⁷ Spieckermann points out a possible theological dimension of the temple's role and of the pilgrimage to Zion: 'It assumes the separation of the person from the temple and this way the pain of alienation from God. The person finds oneself in the tension between experienced and missing presence of God, or in other words, in the tension between feeling at-home in the temple and being on a journey in places where one often does not know whether they still belong to God's living space or are already possessed by other powers, and this way always become places of harm and death. Thinking of a pilgrimage provides a person who is far away from God with orientation and a goal.' See Hermann Spieckermann, 'Der theologische Kosmos des Psalters', *BThZ* 21 (2004), p. 71.

of the peace in Jerusalem on the worshipper in his fellowship with the brothers and tribesmen (friends) are central.

It is striking that the terms used for the *audience*, not just here, but particularly here, are *missing*.¹⁸ The phrase *praise the name YHWH* has cultic connotations (v. 4) but formulations like ‘*seeking the face*’, *falling down or standing before YHWH* etc. are missing. Jerusalem appears as a traditional gathering place of the past and the worshipper gladly remembers earlier summonses to the pilgrimage. The situation of the worshipper can also be thought of as being in a foreign land, from where he wishes Jerusalem happiness and remembers his past experiences in Jerusalem and is fortified by these.

The petitioner in Ps 123 lifts his eyes in any case not to Zion but toward heaven, where YHWH dwells. When Ps 120-124 speak of a pilgrimage, the route travelled is very indefinite. Ps 122 reaches the destination – at least the gates of Jerusalem. Ps 121 mentions the dangers experienced by a traveller. Ps 120, 123 and 124 may be understood without reference to a journey and leave out the asserted reference to Zion.

It is perhaps thinkable that Ps 122, with its steep theology of Jerusalem, was inserted within the neighbouring psalms together with the system of given headings, with the aim of imposing its Zion-theology on the other psalms. That Ps 122 was specially composed as an editorial Psalm, as Crow¹⁹ and Zenger assume, seems to be improbable on account of the barely minor connections between Ps 122 and its immediate neighbours. It seems to me rather that a distinct theological accent was inserted here; but to speak of a conscious composition appears to me to be an over-interpretation in view of the remote keyword connections with the neighbouring psalms.

The force of persuasion, that Ps 122 should be characterised as a composition for the group of five of Ps 120-124, must be regarded as unconvincing, with regard to its high measure of self-sufficiency, and the independence from Zion in the other neighbouring psalms. Ps 122 plays its own key in the quintet of Ps 120-124. The assumption of an *insertion of*

¹⁸ See Friedhelm Hartenstein, *Das Angesicht JHWHs. Studien zu seinem höfischen und kultischen Bedeutungshintergrund in den Psalmen und in Exodus 32-34*, FAT 55 (Tübingen, 2008), esp. pp. 215-216. Hartenstein points to a ‘complete absence of “countenance”-phrases’ in Psalms 120-134 and 135-137. He explains it – with Seybold – with the fact that the prayers supposedly have a lay origin by non-priestly cult participants and were only later added and adapted to the Psalms collection. The concept of a pilgrimage psalm, which underlines blessings of everyday situations, was changed only insofar as holiness symbolism was added but it remains an outside layer on top of an inner temple symbolism of priestly circles (like Ps 27). Already Seybold, p. 77ff, underlined the twin perspective of ‘folk piety and Zion-theology’.

¹⁹ Loren D. Crow, *The Songs of Ascents* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), pp. 43-47.

Zion could solve this problem, whereby Ps 122 elevates Jerusalem to a place of security and safety.

On Ps 125-129

The direction of address of **Ps 125** differs from that of the psalms which have been considered until now. Ps 125 is not spoken as a prayer of an individual or of a group, but more in the manner of wisdom in the third person as ‘those who trust’ (v. 1), ‘his people’ (v. 2), and of the ‘righteous’ (v. 3), ‘good’ and ‘upright’ (v. 4) in contrast to the ‘evildoers’ (v. 5). In the centre is not a description of hardships or the experience of rescue of a group, but the *positioning* of the pious with respect to God. First of all the description of the standing of those who trust YHWH is undertaken drawing on a comparison with Zion as an aid: Just as Mount Zion never trembles, in mythological speaking terms, so stable are those who trust God (v. 1). The phrase לעולם יושב ‘which will be dwelt in forever’ also occurs in Ps 9:8 – there as a statement about YHWH himself, who lives or reigns forever. Ps 120-134 use the perspective of eternity with the help of עולם sparingly, the temporal concluding formula ‘forever’ is only used three times in Ps 121:8; 131:3 and 133:3 [125:2]. Ps 125:1 differs in that it is a statement and not just a wish: ‘Mount Zion cannot be shaken but is dwelt in forever’. The יושב shows Zion not as a lifeless cliff but as a living space – a place for humans and the divine presence.

V. 2 takes the topology of Jerusalem, slightly raised and surrounded by hills, as a metaphor for the protection which YHWH would like to grant his people – both now and forevermore. In a chiasmus ‘those who trust’ and ‘his people’ are linked to ‘Mount Zion’ and ‘Jerusalem’. A static picture emerges, the mythological eternal firmness of the mountain,²⁰ which is not questioned, and the natural position of the city of Jerusalem are made into symbols of unshaken trust, that those who trust YHWH stand fast, and that his people are protected. The manner of speaking from Zion is neither dynamic, nor cultic tinged, nor does it contain terms for the audience. Ps 125:1-2 express undeniable facts as a statement of trust.

V. 3 states that social oppression (‘sceptre of the wicked’) will not remain over the ‘inheritance of the righteous’. An interim of hardship is a possibility, but it cannot be permitted that the righteous themselves reach out for unrighteousness. Israel can be hard-pressed, but cannot be subdued in the long term. Therein is manifested the staunchness and protection of

²⁰ See Egbert Ballhorn, *Der Telos des Psalters. Der Textzusammenhang des Vierten und Fünften Psalmenbuches* (Ps 90-150), BBB 139 (Bonn, 2004), p. 231. Ballhorn convincingly describes the differences between the two Zion images – the mythological and the topographical.

Israel. Ps 125:3 corresponds in certain respects to the descriptions of hardship in the preceding psalms. With the concluding verses 4-5a the worshippers wish for God to effect the action-consequence connection (*Tun-Ergehen-Zusammenhang*),²¹ whereby He does good to the good and lets the crooked go their crooked ways into banishment. The peace-wish of v. 5b may be understood thus: When God accomplishes his purpose that the righteous and evildoers fare according to their deeds and the trust in the immovability and the protection of the people is shown to be true, then *shalom-like* conditions reign. The objective facts concerning Mount Zion or Jerusalem serve simply as *symbols* for the condition of those who trust in YHWH; and therefore the Zion-theology is not the basic message, it is rather an *argument* for the defending and blessing actions of God. In addition to the static picture of the believer before the God of the 'mountain of God' and of the 'city of God'²² of verses 1-3 comes a dynamic picture in verse 4-5a, which sees the worshipper in dependence on God's operations. The picture of God is on the whole relatively abstract and aloof so that the personal 'trust' of 125:1 stands in contrast to it.

The speaker's perspective of **Ps 126** differs from that of Ps 125 in that in verses 1-4 a clear 'we' speaks of the joy regarding the return of YHWH to Zion and God's returning care.²³ Zion is here the starting point and the goal of God's dynamic movement. The desired surprising turn in Israel's history is compared with the sudden swelling of the waters in a dried up river bed (v. 4). Pictures of peasant life with sowing and reaping show the visible signs of God's blessing (v. 5-6).²⁴ Ps 126 develops a *historical theological* picture of God, a God who has shown himself in the past to be powerful (v. 2-3). God's power is even recognised by the foreign nations.²⁵ According to Ina Willi-Plein, and followed by Erich Zenger, the accusative אֶת-שִׁיבָה צִיּוֹן should be understood as 'return with respect to Zion', the verb as an intransitive 'return'. Zenger deduces that YHWH returns to Mount Zion and interprets this in compliance with the proclamation of Deutero-Isaiah in connection with the freedom of the exiles and their return to Zion, which was made possible by Cyrus, and which occurred like an unexpected dream and manifested itself before the

²¹ Ps 125:4-5a is evidence for the fact that the action-consequence connection (*Tun-Ergehen-Zusammenhang*) can by no means be assumed as automatic but, according to Klaus Koch, God is always part of it. See Andreas Scherer, *Lästerlicher Trost. Ein Gang durch die Eliphaz-Reden im Hiobbuch* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 2008), esp. his excursus on TEZ (*Tun-Ergehen-Zusammenhang*).

²² See Zenger, p. 498: 'Psalm 125 is a fascinating retelling of the pre-exilic, mythically impregnated Zion-theology which celebrates Zion as "God's mountain" and "God's city" – in the midst of a chaotic world.'

²³ See Ina Willi-Plein, 'ŠWB – ŠBWT – eine Wiedererwägung', *ZAH* 4 (1991), pp. 55-71.

²⁴ See Zenger, p. 509.

²⁵ Quite rightly Zenger, p. 508 points parallels to the message of Deutero-Isaiah, esp. Is 40:10-12; 45:14-22; 48:20.

nations.²⁶ Not before v. 4 does Zenger interpret this as a plea of the worshippers for YHWH to return to 'His people' and restore their fortunes in daily life. Zenger sees Zion as a reference for the *restitution* of the temple and he separates it clearly from the 'community'.²⁷ Egbert Ballhorn understands Zion in Ps 125:1 in the form of a synecdoche as a synonym for Israel. Some Masoretic manuscripts and the Septuagint interpreted *יְשִׁיבַת צִיּוֹן* personally as captivity of Zion. Both sections of the psalm use motifs which express the suddenness of the change, so unexpected as a dream or the return of the waters in a wadi. Thus the logic of the psalm would be: As surprisingly as God came to us in the past, may He so come to us in the future. The result in the past and in the future is joy (*רִנָּה*, v. 2a.5) in the community. With respect to the return to the 'community', this should not happen in the future (so Zenger), but has *already happened in the past*. Strictly speaking, Ps 126 is not then a pilgrimage psalm, but rather a look to the past at a turning point in the exile should encourage the worshippers to trust YHWH in their daily life as farmers, as He can give blessings again. This can be prayed and experienced *far away* from Jerusalem.²⁸ Seen in this manner it is also possible to follow Ballhorn's conclusion: Ps 126 also does not show itself to be a pilgrimage psalm. It leads rather *away* from Jerusalem. It would have been simple to connect the return out of exile with a pilgrimage motif. This is not the case. The retrospect on the turning point of the exile serves only to remind of God's saving actions in the past.²⁹

The picture of God shows (again) a sovereign God who has intervened for the good of his people, before the nations, and who can intervene again.

When we consider **Ps 127**, it is possible to see not the temple as a building but the community as a social temple. 'House' and 'city' in Ps 127.1 are not meant architecturally, but rather as human exertion in the building of a room for people, who live within it. As the 'builder' of a house, YHWH brings it about that the people truly find the buildings that they have constructed to be a 'home', not least as a 'house fellowship' of the family.³⁰ In addition, YHWH can provide for such people, in that they

²⁶ Ibid., p. 507.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 508f.

²⁸ See Thomas Willi, 'Das *שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת*. Zion und der Sitz im Leben der "Aufstiegslieder" Psalm 120-134', in *Prophetie und Psalmen*, eds. Beat Huwiler, Hans-Peter Mathys, Beat Weber, Festschrift für Klaus Seybold (AOAT 280) (Münster, 2001). Willi demonstrates the quite likely possibility that people's representatives (*Standmannschaften*) were sent in delegations to Jerusalem to guarantee that this way those living far away from Zion could participate in the sacrifices. Expressions of blessing, greetings and farewells in Psalms 120-134 can this way be easily explained (p. 161).

²⁹ Ballhorn, p. 233.

³⁰ Zenger, p. 522.

can enjoy the results of their daily work in peaceful sleep.³¹ Seen in this manner, the family images of v. 3-5 take the image of the house of life of v. 1-2 further.³² The structure concerning the contents of the psalm is *theocentric*. The syntax of v. 1 and 3 underscore this slant, in that YHWH is put at the front. In the inverted verbal phrase God is emphatically put to the fore. Unless YHWH builds or watches, humans labour in vain. In the nominal phrase children are depicted as gifts of YHWH. Understanding the redaction heading³³ as a reading instruction to read the psalm with regard to Solomon, the psalm obtains a *further dimension*, particularly with regard to the term בית in v. 1 and the theme of the city in v. 2. The building of the temple and the so-called kingdom of peace of Solomon should be thought about. It is not possible to find other references to a Zion-theology in this psalm other than this assumed reading instruction.³⁴ Thus it appears to be an over-interpretation, when it is maintained that Ps 127 was placed in the middle of the pilgrimage Psalter as a 'royal' instruction for living from Solomon, and that this corresponds to the whole intention of Ps 120-134 of communicating to the normal folk, 'to what great extent they were living under the blessings of the God of Zion'.³⁵ The God of Ps 127 is in no way referred to as the *God of Zion*, only by his *name*. What Ps 127 states can be experienced *far away* from Zion and also be believed *independently* from Zion; it is true of building a house or guarding a city in general. Ps 127, like Ps 125, is impregnated by the idea of an action-consequence connection (*Tun-Ergehen-Zusammenhang*), which completely depends on God's action and intervention for its results, admittedly without the sharp contrast between the righteous and the evildoer of Ps 125. If שמר is a keyword in Ps 121 for the protection of a traveller by an accompanying God, so too is the necessary divine protection it expresses, when humans attempt to protect their own living space (v. 1b). The reference to the city can be understood as an argument *a maiore ad minus*, for that which holds for the common life of a whole city, is a model for the daily life of a family in the city or before the gates of the city – if the city requires watchmen, the family requires sons who are 'arrows in the quiver', who can protect the house fellowship against intruders. Hence Ps 127 places the dependency of the

³¹ Ibid., p. 527: 'Peaceful sleep as a symbol for a content, calm and fulfilling life and as an expression for trust toward a protecting God is according to Old Testament tradition really a gift of God.'

³² Ibid., p. 517.

³³ Cf. about the function of headings Martin Kleer, 'Der liebliche Sänger der Psalmen Israels'. *Untersuchungen zu David als Dichter und Beter der Psalmen*. BBB 108 (Bodenheim, 1996); Klaus Seybold, *Die Psalmen. Eine Einführung* (Stuttgart, 1991).

³⁴ See to the contrary Ballhorn, p. 234. Ballhorn rightly speaks of 'general images from urban spheres', but believes to observe, due a keyword connection between 'gate' in Ps 127:5 and Ps 122:2, an attempt to guide the reader 'toward Jerusalem'.

³⁵ Zenger, p. 532.

daily fellowship on God's working in the forefront and not a God of distant Zion.

Ps 128 has no reference to Zion in its first section. Ps 128,1-4 praises the fear of God in a general manner of wisdom and is directed at a 'thou' and develops the positive results for gains of one's own work and for life in the house fellowship. Thus, in its musing on success in life and the action-consequence connection (*Tun-Ergehen-Zusammenhang*) Ps 128 stands in a row with Ps 127 and Ps 125. Ps 125 stresses the steadfastness of him who trusts in YHWH and the wish that the 'good' and the 'upright' should prosper, in contrast to the evildoers. Ps 127 underscores the dependency of the family house fellowship and the future of the family on God's giving. Ps 128 links the blessing of all who *fear God* and are obedient ('who walk in his ways', v. 1) with the *theology of blessing* (v. 4). In the setting of a patriarchal family the consequence of the fear of God is graphically shown to the addressee. The speaker's perspective of Ps 125 and 127 meditate on happiness in life in general terms without using direct speech. Ps 128:2-3 applies the general ideal (v. 1,4.) by means of a personal blessing on the individual.³⁶ Though the אָשֵׁרִי at the end of Ps 127 and the beginning of Ps 128 are closely connected, more so as in Psalms 120-134, these two alone contain a word of blessing. The concluding rule of life in Ps 128:4 uses נָבַר as an object, as in the blessing of Ps 127:5, so that it is not difficult to read Ps 128:1-4 as a sensible continuation and intensification of Ps 127:3-5.

The ideal of the blessed work and family of Ps 128:1-4 is complemented in Ps 128:5 with the desire, which changes the horizon of consideration. The מִצִּיּוֹן speaks of 'Zion' as a point of reference for the blessing of the individual. It is combined with the invitation to gaze at the prosperity of Jerusalem (v. 5a) and this throughout life and through the experience (seeing)³⁷ of one's own family dynasty (v. 6a). The psalm ends with a request for peace for Jerusalem, as in Ps 125:5.³⁸ The relationship to Zion can be understood in the form of theological geography, as a local departure point for blessing in the daily life of a small family. Besides this, the 'connective justice' of those who fear God is correlated with the well-being of Jerusalem – if Jerusalem prospers, then the pious prosper too, never mind where they are living. What holds on a grand scale – the promise of a dynasty, the dependence on God's blessing for the future – holds also for the individual family.³⁹ The close involvement of Jerusalem's

³⁶ Ibid., p. 538. Zenger considers vv. 2-3 to be an application and finds a change in speakers in Ps 127:2 by the use of the second person plural.

³⁷ See Job 42:16 for seeing one's descendents as an image of a satisfying life.

³⁸ The theme of peace is also found in Ps 120 and 122.

³⁹ Ballhorn, p. 235 affirms the logical connection between both parts of the psalm with the fact that the city of Jerusalem has already been mentioned several times in the pilgrimage psalms with the purpose of

fortune and the personal good is expressed most clearly in Ps 122:6-8, in the psalm which actually has Jerusalem as the centre of its theology – even syntactically. Ps 128 must be clearly differentiated from Ps 122 in its degree of Zion-theology. The following commentary appears too effusive: ‘In the view of Ps 128 the well-being of the individual and that of Jerusalem are closely connected: the fortune of the individual culminates in the fact that he can rejoice in Jerusalem’s prosperity. Jerusalem’s fortune is only complete when the individuals, who love Jerusalem as the centre of their lives, are also happy.’⁴⁰ The formulation ‘who love Jerusalem as the centre of their lives’, appears exaggerated, for in Ps 128 it is left open in what form the fear of God and the right walk with God manifest themselves. Zion is the *source* (*Ausgangspunkt*) of the blessing of God, but is not necessarily a place of pilgrimage or of worship for the family fathers.

In conclusion, if it is accurate that Ps 125 just uses Zion and Jerusalem as an *illustration* of God’s actions, Ps 126:1 does not deal primarily with the return to Zion but to the *community*, and Ps 127 manages without *mentioning* Jerusalem or Zion, then the love of the pious is not strictly towards Zion, but rather toward *God*, which can also be demonstrated using the *example* of Jerusalem. Zion serves as an illustration for the God who blesses.

Ps 129 combines the description of hardship which is qualified with the adjective רבה (‘too long’) as in Ps 120 and 123, with the hope of negative consequences for the oppressors. In the middle of Ps 129 are the nominal sentence of v. 4 יהוה צדיק (‘YHWH is righteous’) and the statement קצץ עבות רשעים (‘he has cut through the cords of the wicked’). Thus the contrast between the righteous and the evildoers, as mentioned in Ps 125 on a *vertical* plane, is drawn out with YHWH as righteous in a *horizontal* plane. God has saved Israel and now the worshippers desire that their oppressors be put to shame and see their blessing removed. They turn to the *God of righteousness*, not to the *God of Zion*. The wicked are characterised in v. 5 as all those who hate Zion. Zion can be understood without a problem as a cipher for oppressed Israel, from whose affliction v. 1-3 speak in modified agricultural images. Ballhorn has noted additionally, that the closing formula of blessing ‘does not originate in Zion nor from a group of priests. The power to bless is neither bound to a particular place nor to particular persons.’⁴¹ Ps 129 shows the reverse side of the blessing, which those who trust in Yahweh experience (Ps 125) and which is described in

depicting God’s presence and blessing. This way, images of homey idylls ‘cannot be separated from their “ecclesial” framework’.

⁴⁰ Zenger, p. 545.

⁴¹ Ballhorn, p. 236.

Ps 126-128 in terms of rewards for work and in family happiness. Those who plough on the backs of the Israelites instead of in the fields will be left without produce from the harvest and will be like withered grass. The images of oppression in Ps 129 awaken political associations and combine the desire, that the sceptre of the wicked (Ps 125:3) be just a passing burden resulting in the final end of the cords of the wicked (Ps 129:4). The removal of power of the enemies of the petitioner through God is also a removal of power of the enemies of God. Psalms 125-129 have their theological centre in their reflections on this God of righteousness to whom the oppressed and the peasants who are dependent on God's blessing can flee and can reckon that God will fulfil his justice. Seen in terms of terminology, the condensed confession to this God does not occur in the middle psalm but in the last psalm of this group of five: YHWH is righteous.

On Ps 130-134

Ps 130-131 can, with good reason, be read together as *twin psalms*. The analogical composition (from individual experience, which is graphically made clear and the subsequent summons to Israel, to hope on YHWH in the same sense) and the similar content suggest that we read both psalms as a movement of prayer.⁴² The pair of psalms takes the afflicted soul as its theme and here alone in psalms 120-134 the sins (עֲוֹנוֹת) of the petitioner and of Israel (Ps 130:3,8). Ps 130 expresses the irreplaceable dependence of the petitioner and of Israel on YHWH's readiness to forgive. 'Grace' (חֶסֶד) and 'redemption' (פְּדוּתָהּ) are available by YHWH alone. The cautious use of the personal pronoun in Ps 120-134 lets 130:8 shine out more distinctly, that *He* will redeem Israel from their sins. Between the personal perspective of the speaker of I-thou (130:1-4/131:1-2aa) and the closing summons to Israel (130:7-8/131:3) there is a statement of the speaker I about God in the third person, explicitly in Ps 130:5-6 and to be completed in 131:2ab-b.

The pictures of God in Ps 130-131 show that Ps 130 confronts the sinner with God, who can forgive and redeem him (Ps 130) and Ps 131 confronts the person who is cleaning himself with his mother, who can wean him. The perspective for Israel in the last verse of Ps 131 is through its choice of vocabulary not in harmony with the flow of the psalm, but is easily explained as a literal taking-up of the end of Ps 130:7. Thus the invitation to Israel brackets both psalms into a pair, which may well be due to a redactor's revision of the text. Reading from 131:3 the relationship of the satisfied soul to YHWH has clearly been added. As for the question

⁴² See Zenger, pp. 590, 608.

about the meaning of the Zion-theology for Ps 130-131, we may retain that this twin pair manages *without* reference to Jerusalem or Zion. Should these psalms have served to prepare for a visit to the temple, it would have been easily possible to insert a sign about these at the end, but this does not happen. This catches the eye all the more, as the following three psalms all have an *explicit* relationship to Zion. As Ps 132, on account of its length, does not pass within the general framework of Ps 120-134, we conclude for the time being with a consideration of Ps 133-134.

Ps 133 describes, in a wisdom manner, then graphically, how fulfilling and comfortable successful human *fellowship* is. The oil calls forth images of feasts and of cultic consecration – strengthened through the mention of Aaron as a cipher for the high priest. The image of oil running down is consistent, that of dew is problematic, for Hermon and Zion are not so easy to relate to one another as head and beard and clothing. The rural image of the dew, which enables life, is possibly meant as a ‘mythical metaphor for God-given dew (dew of the gods)’⁴³ through the mentioning of Mount Hermon. The ‘mountains of Zion’, here plural, could correspondingly stand for the holy mountain simply confronted with the Baal-Hermon and thus represent a ‘theological topology’. Accordingly Ps 133:3 is the designated place for the blessing of God, ‘for there YHWH commands his blessing’. If we compare the few other places where blessing and command are linked together, it becomes apparent that both Lev 25:21 (‘I will command my blessing for you ...’) and Dtn 28:8 (‘YHWH will send a blessing ...’) show an object of the blessing. Who the blessing is for has been omitted in Ps 133:3, and must be added from the context by the fellowship of v. 1. Zion is characterised as the place of the blessing – of Yahweh’s blessing, which comes from above, for the community in Ps 133 in no way excludes people from the privilege of the blessing, who live beyond Zion or who experience daily brotherly unity. Through the mention of Aaron and the mountains of Zion the text obtains a cult flavour, which has a dominant effect in the context of the two neighbouring psalms, for Ps 132 and 134 also mention Zion. The psalm proclaims in its few words a much more cautious Zion-theology than the enthusiasm of Ps 122 and Ps 132. These blessings are in any case given in plural form to the community in contrast to the blessing obtained by the individual who fears God in Ps 128:5.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 646. He underlines (p. 647) that mention of ‘dew’ always includes its effect, namely ‘fertility, freshness and life’.

Ps 134 is the only one of the so-called pilgrimage psalms to have a distinct term for the audience⁴⁴ and to identify procedures in the temple, by naming ‘those who minister in the house of YHWH’ (v. 1b) and the hands raised in the sanctuary. The unusual הנה with imperative gives the beginning of Ps 134 a parallel with that of Ps 133. The taking-up of the root בִּרַךְ makes out of the place of God’s blessing a place of blessing – the worship of God through the יהוה. As the above-mentioned servants also stand in the temple during the night, they must be temple staff and therefore priests, who first of all praise YHWH and then pass on the word of blessing (for the individual, the whole community, who can be included in the thou form) (v. 3a). V. 3b qualifies YHWH as the life-sustaining God of creation עֲשֵׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ, as in Ps 121:2 and 124:8, with the difference that Ps 134:3 names YHWH as the God of Zion and of creation. Does this Zion-theological ending result in the possibility of regarding Ps 134 as a ‘Summary of the Zion-theology of the pilgrimage Psalter’, in which it is a question of ‘both worshipping YHWH who is present on Mount Zion, and experiencing the fellowship which He has established, as well as asking for and receiving from Him a blessing for real daily life, far away from Zion’?⁴⁵

Together with Ps 122, **Ps 132** exhibits the strongest temple-theological statements in Ps 120-134. The efforts of King David as the actual founder of the temple,⁴⁶ to find a מָקוֹם לַיהוָה, a place for YHWH (v. 5), stands in the royal oath and finds its match in YHWH’s solemn promise to declare Zion as a lasting place of rest and a place to live (v. 14). The taking-up of the promise of Nathan and the integration of David in the Psalms links the historical-theological theology of the king to the Zion-theology. Yahweh and not the king remains the principle protagonist and God draws the poor (v. 15), the priests and the pious into his salvatory actions (v. 16). The request to Yahweh to rise up (v. 8) and the jussive not to reject the ‘face of the anointed one’ could indicate courtly audiences,⁴⁷ so that Ps 132 belongs to the few psalms in the pilgrimage group which use terms of audience.

The human oath and the divine vow form the load-bearing architecture of this psalm and have a certain theological proximity to the already mentioned ideas of the efficacy of the action-consequence-connection, or of a connective justice. When the king takes an oath and

⁴⁴ See Hartenstein, *Angesicht Gottes* 81 A 30. Hartenstein vermutet für Ps 5,8, dass der Beter das Gebäude des Tempels nicht betreten durfte, zugleich der Heiligtumsbesuch als “mentales szenisches Bild” den Zugang zur göttlichen Thronsphäre vergegenwärtige.

⁴⁵ Zenger, p. 657.

⁴⁶ See Zenger, p. 614.

⁴⁷ See Hartenstein, pp. 612ff who develops the dimensions of a petition during a hearing of vv. 8-10.

endures hardships, he hopes to receive the favour of God for the Zion-project.⁴⁸ More in the sense of a wisdom theology rather than of a priestly theology the priests should not be clothed for the service of sacrifice, but with 'righteousness', (צִדִּיק, v. 9), and the Chasidim rejoice (v. 9,16). The official attire of righteousness results in 'salvation', יִשׁוּעַ, in God's promises of salvation. In fact, Zion is not elevated in its significance as a place of myth or of sacrificial cult, but as a 'place of righteousness'.⁴⁹ That the presence of God in Zion is manifested in liturgy and celebration in the perspective of Ps 132 remains at most an assumption.⁵⁰ That psalms 130-131 are to be read as 'preparatory commandments for an encounter with the God of Zion'⁵¹ is in Ps 132 absolutely not evident, for here the question of forgiveness or entry conditions is not posed, instead, the active efforts of the king for the founding of the temple (supposedly as role model for all pious people) is in the centre of focus.

From our considerations of Psalms 120-134, we have shown that Ps 122 and 132 elevate themselves as prominent representatives of Zion-theology from the remainder of the group. They agree on many theological issues in that they both a) give particular emphasis to a place; b) link the promise of David's dynasty to the place; c) underline the joy of the pious, in Ps 122 at the possible pilgrimage, in Ps 132 at the outworkings of the blessing from this place; and d) highlight Zion in its significance for the community. According to Ps 122, the peace-wish for Jerusalem is based on the hope of a peaceful future for the worshipper. According to Ps 132 the royal oath is linked to the hope of the grace of blessing, which should flow out of Zion. In the centre is not the temple as an edifice nor as a cultic place, rather the effects of the *blessing for the social community*, brothers and tribesmen, as well as for the poor, priests and pious. Both these psalms probably draw from a traditional Jerusalem theology of the temple and insert this into psalms, which make Zion less a place and more an *illustration* for the works of God by which humans are blessed. The common heading of the group of Psalms 120-134 surely owes itself to this temple-theology. The individual psalms as smaller hills of this mountain of psalms must be continuously scrutinised to ascertain whether they really contain as much 'Zion-theology' as is bestowed on them from the summits of Ps 122 and 132, lest the mountain ramble should replace the mountain climbing, or the exegesis of the Psalter replace the exegesis of the psalms.

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⁴⁸ See Zenger, p. 619f who points out the 'interplay' in a vow in the ancient Eastern understanding.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 631.

⁵⁰ Different see Zenger, p. 630.

⁵¹ Ibid.

4

Jesus and Evil Spirits in the Light of Psalm 91

Craig A. Evans

The Synoptic Gospels provide us with an account of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness. The Markan evangelist only tells us that Jesus 'was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered to him' (Mark 1:13). We hear of no conversation between Jesus and Satan and no one appeals to Scripture. However, in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke readers are presented with much more. These evangelists augment the Markan account of the temptation with a block of material drawn from Q, in which Satan three times tempts Jesus and Jesus three times responds with passages from Deuteronomy (cf. Matt 4:1–11; Luke 4:1–13). In what is the second temptation in Matthew (or third in Luke's ordering), Satan urges Jesus to fling himself from the pinnacle of the Temple. Jesus need not fear, for, after all, the Scripture assures him:

τοῖς ἀγγέλοις αὐτοῦ ἐντελείται περὶ σοῦ
καὶ ἐπὶ χειρῶν ἀροῦσίν σε, μήποτε προσκόψῃς πρὸς λίθον τὸν πόδα
σου.

'He will give his angels charge of you',
and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot
against a stone.' (Matt 4:6)

Satan has quoted most of Ps 91:11–12, which reads in the Masoretic Text:

11. בִּי מִלְאָכָיו יִצְוֶה לְךָ לְשֹׁמְרֶיךָ בְּכָל־דְּרָכֶיךָ:

12. עַל־כַּפֵּיהֶם יִשְׁאוּנֶךָ כִּן־תִּהְיֶה בְּאֶבְנֵי רַגְלֶךָ:

11. For he will give his angels charge of you to guard you in all your ways.

12. On their hands they will bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone. (RSV)

And in the Old Greek, which translates the Hebrew quite literally:

11. ὅτι τοῖς ἀγγέλοις αὐτοῦ ἐντελείται περὶ σοῦ τοῦ διαφυλάξαι σε ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ὁδοῖς σου.

12. ἐπὶ χειρῶν ἀροῦσίν σε, μήποτε προσκόψῃς πρὸς λίθον τὸν πόδα σου.

11. For he will give his angels charge of you to guard you in all your ways.

12. On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.

Satan's appeal to Psalm 91 no longer occasions surprise. Commentators have long suspected that this psalm was understood as offering assurance against demonic affliction. This is seen in rabbinic interpretation, in the targumic paraphrase, and in an apparent allusion to the text in the Greek *Testament of Levi*. Nevertheless, some interpreters have expressed reservations, arguing that the rabbinic and targumic traditions are too late to be of use in New Testament interpretation and that the apparent allusion to Psalm 91 in the *Testament of Levi* is either too vague or may actually be a Christian gloss. However, the discovery at Qumran of Psalm 91 in combination with exorcism psalms has pretty well settled the matter once and for all: Psalm 91 apparently was understood in the time of Jesus as offering divine assurances of protection against demonic powers.

In what follows we shall look at 11Q11, in which we find three(?) previously unknown exorcism psalms and Psalm 91, and then assess the interpretation of Psalm 91 in early Jewish and Christian literature. At the end of the paper I shall return to the question of Jesus and Psalm 91.

The Exorcism Psalms of Qumran

Sandwiched in a cluster of psalms and hymns found in cave 11 (11Q5) David, son of Jesse and composer of many psalms, is introduced. The famous king was quite prolific, as the author tells us:

²Now David the son of Jesse was wise and shone like the light of the sun, a scribe ³and man of discernment, blameless in all his ways before God and people. The Lord gave ⁴him a brilliant and discerning spirit, so that he wrote (the following): psalms, ⁵3,600; songs to sing before the altar accompanying the daily ⁶perpetual burnt-offering, for all the days of the year, 364; ⁷for the Sabbath offerings, 52 songs; and for the New Moon offerings, ⁸all the festival days and the Day of Atonement, 30 songs. ⁹The total of all the songs that he composed was 446, not including ¹⁰four songs for charming the demon-possessed with music. The sum total of everything, psalms and songs, was 4,050. ¹¹All these he composed through prophecy [כִּנְבוּיָהּ] given him by the Most High. (11Q5 [or 11QPs^a] 27:2–11)¹

The Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice Scrolls (4Q400–4Q407, 11Q17, and Mas1k) probably exemplify the fifty-two songs believed composed by David for the Sabbath offerings. This is not to say the men of Qumran

¹ For Hebrew text, see F. García Martínez and E.J.C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition. Volume Two: 4Q274–11Q31* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), pp. 1178–79; J.H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Texts with English Translations. Volume 4A: Pseudepigraphic and Non-Masoretic Psalms and Prayers* (The Princeton Theological Seminary Dead Sea Scrolls Project; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck]; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), pp. 214–15. See also J.A. Sanders, *The Psalms Scroll of Qumrân Cave 11* (DJD 4; Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), pp. 48, 92–93.

thought their Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice were actually composed by the famous king (after all, David's name does not appear), but they probably thought their songs were similar.² In any event, what is of great interest for the present purposes is the claim that David composed 'four songs for charming the demon-possessed [הַפְּגוּעִים] with music'. The association of music and dealing with demon-possession no doubt owes its origin to the stories of David playing the lyre to soothe Saul when troubled by an evil spirit (1 Sam 16:23; 18:10). As it turns out, elsewhere among the scrolls we may actually have the 'four' psalms to be sung (or performed) over the possessed, to which 11Q5 makes reference.³

The exorcism psalms are found in 11Q11 (or 11QapocrPs). This scroll seems to comprise three extracanonical psalms plus Psalm 91, for four psalms in all. The extracanonical psalms are clearly exorcism psalms.⁴ Given the Aramaic paraphrase of Psalm 91, later rabbinic understanding of it, and its quotation in the temptation of Jesus, the appearance of Psalm 91 in 11Q11 strongly suggests that this psalm was understood not only at Qumran as an exorcism psalm, but was understood this way among many Jews in the time of Jesus. The targumic and rabbinic understanding of Psalm 91 as an exorcism psalm may well represent late traditions, but these traditions appear to be based on an ancient interpretation, attested in 11Q11, the Q story of the temptation of Jesus, and perhaps also the *Testament of Levi*.

Before turning to the exorcism psalms of 11Q11, it will be helpful to review the evidence of the Aramaic Psalter, in which the prophetic gift of David and of son Solomon is accentuated. We begin with references to David:

To the choirmaster. Of David. The fool says in his heart . . . (Hebr. 14:1).

For praise; in the spirit of prophecy [בריוח נבואה] through David. The fool says in his heart . . . (Targ. 14:1).

² According to Josephus, once David's wars were ended, the king 'composed songs and hymns to God, of several sorts of meter . . . He also made instruments of music, and taught the Levites to sing hymns to God, both on that called the Sabbath day, and on other festivals.' (*Ant.* 7.305).

³ So J.P.M. van der Ploeg, 'Un petit rouleau de Psaumes apocryphes (11QPsAp^a)', in G. Jeremias, H.-W. Kuhn, and H. Stegemann, eds., *Tradition und Glaube: Das frühe Christentum in seiner Umwelt* (K.G. Kuhn Festschrift; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), pp. 128–39 + plates II–VII, here p. 129; and É. Puech, '11QPsAp^a: Un rituel d'exorcismes: Essai de reconstruction', *RevQ* 14 (1990), pp. 377–408, esp. 399–403; idem, 'Les deux derniers psaumes davidiques du rituel d'exorcisme 11QPsAp^a iv,4–5,14', in D. Dimant and U. Rappaport, eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Forty Years of Research* (STDJ 10; Leiden: Brill, 1992), pp. 64–89, esp. 78–89.

⁴ P.W. Flint (*The Dead Sea Psalms Scrolls and the Book of Psalms* [STDJ 17; Leiden: Brill, 1997] p. 167) refers to the collection of psalms as a 'Davidic Exorcism Handbook'. That 11Q11 comprises four *Davidic* psalms is a plausible conjecture, but it is not certain, given the fragmentary nature of the scroll.

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David the servant of the Lord, who addressed the words of this song to the Lord on the day when the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul (Hebr. 18:1).

For praise. About the miracles that occurred to the servant of the Lord, David, who sang in prophecy [בְּנְבוּאָה] in the presence of the Lord the words of this song about all the days that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the sword of Saul (Targ. 18:1).

But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me (Hebr. 49:16 [49:15 Eng.])

David said in the spirit of prophecy [בְּרוּחַ נְבוּאָה], ‘Truly God will redeem my soul from the judgment of Gehenna’ (Targ. 49:16).

A Psalm of David (Hebr. 103:1).

Composed by David, spoken in prophecy [בְּנְבוּאָה] (Targ. 103:1).

In these four Psalms David is said to have spoken or to have sung ‘in prophecy’ (בְּנְבוּאָה) or ‘in the spirit of prophecy’ (בְּרוּחַ נְבוּאָה). The Aramaic also assigns Psalm 49, or at least part of it, to David. We find the same said of Solomon:

Psalm of Solomon. Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to the royal son! (MT 72:1).

Composed by Solomon, uttered in prophecy [בְּנְבוּאָה]. O God, give your just rulings to the King Messiah, and your righteousness to the son of King David (Targ. 72:1).

In the Aramaic version of Psalm 72, not only does Solomon speak ‘in prophecy’ (בְּנְבוּאָה), he identifies God’s son (i.e., ‘your son’) as none other than the royal Messiah (i.e., ‘the King Messiah’). Solomon also appears in the Aramaic version of Psalm 91, another Psalm attributed to David in the Aramaic. The Hebrew and Aramaic may be compared:

(He) will say to the Lord, ‘My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust’. ³For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence (Hebr. 91:2–3).

David said: ‘I will say to the Lord . . . ³For he will deliver you, Solomon my son, from the snare and the obstacle, from death and confusion’ (Targ. 91:2–3).

As we shall see shortly, David's promise to Solomon that God will protect the wise monarch from 'the snare and the obstacle, from death and confusion' will include protection from evil spirits. This is another point where Solomon compares with David. Just as David was famous for his numerous compositions, including ones that counter the baneful power of evil spirits, so Solomon was famous for his many compositions, including ones designed to counter evil spirits. According to Josephus, Solomon 'composed books of odes and songs – a thousand and five; of parables and similitudes – three thousand; for he spoke a parable upon every sort of tree . . . and in like manner also about beasts . . . he described them all like a philosopher'⁴⁵ God also enabled him to learn that skill which expels demons He composed such incantations [ἐπωδός] . . . and he left behind him the manner of using exorcisms [ἐξορκώσεων], by which they drive away demons, so that they never return' (*Ant.* 8.44–44). This intriguing passage will be quoted and discussed more fully below. Let us now turn to Qumran's exorcism psalms.

The exorcism psalms of 11Q11 are as follows:⁵

First Exorcism Psalm:

'[...] and the one who weeps for him [...] the curse [...] by the Lord [...] dragon [...] the ear[th ...] adjur[ing ...] to [...] this [...]the demon[s ...] he will dwe[ll ...]' (1:1–10 [formerly frag. A, lines 2–11]).

Second Exorcism Psalm:

[To David. Concerning the words of incantation] in the name of [the Lord ... the ac]t of Solomon when he invok[ed the name of the Lord ... the sp]irits and the demons [...]these (are) [the de]mons. And the pr[ince of hosti]lity, [he (is) Belial w]ho [rules] over the dep[ths of dark]ness [...] to] magni[fy the Go]d of [...] his people accomplish healing [...upon] your name finds support. And invok[e ...Is]rael. Take strength [...] the heavens [...] w]ho separated [...] Who are y]ou? [...] the deep[s ...] the

⁵ For Hebrew text and translation, see J.A. Sanders, 'A Liturgy for Healing the Stricken', in Charlesworth, ed., *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Texts with English Translations*. Volume 4A: *Pseudepigraphic and Non-Masoretic Psalms and Prayers*, pp. 216–33; F. García Martínez, E.J.C. Tigchelaar, and A.S. van der Woude, *Qumran Cave 11. II. 11Q2–18, 11Q20–31* (DJD 23; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 181–205 + plates XXII–XXV; García Martínez and Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition. Volume Two: 4Q274–11Q31*, pp. 1200–1205; M.G. Abegg, P.W. Flint, and E. Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible: The Oldest Known Bible Translated for the First Time into English* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1999) pp. 539–42. See also Flint, *The Dead Sea Psalms Scrolls and the Book of Psalms*, pp. 246–48. For scholarly discussion of these exorcism psalms, see M. Delcor, 'L'utilisation des psaumes contre les mauvais esprits à Qoumran', in *La vie de la Parole: De l'Ancien au Nouveau Testament: Études d'exégèse et d'herméneutique bibliques offertes à Pierre Grelot* (Paris: Desclée, 1987), pp. 61–70; Puech, '11QPsAp^a: un rituel d'exorcismes: Essai de reconstruction', pp. 377–408; idem, 'Les deux derniers psaumes davidiques du rituel d'exorcisme 11QPsAp^a iv,4 – 5,14', pp. 64–89; idem, 'Les psaumes davidiques du rituel d'exorcisme (11Q11)', in D.K. Falk, F. García Martínez, and E. M. Schuller, eds., *Sapiential, Liturgical and Poetical Texts from Qumran* (STDJ 35; Leiden: Brill, 2000) pp. 160–81.

earth and a[ll that is in the] earth. Who m[ade ...] and the port[ents ...] earth? The Lord (is) the on[e who] made ev[erything ...] his [...] adjuring all the an[gels ...] all the proge[ny ...] who stand in service before [him ... he]avens and [all] the earth [...] who send upon [...ear]th sin and upon every hu[man ...] they know his wondr[ous works] which they cannot [...] the Lor]d. If [they] do not [...] from before the Lord [...] to kill a soul [...] the Lord and they will fear that great [... o]ne among you [...] a th[ousand ...] from the servants of the Lor[d ... g]reat [blow] and [...] and] great [...] adjuring [...] and the great by [...] a mighty one and he will pur[sue ...] the whole earth. [...] the G]od of the heavens then [...] the Lord will strike you (with) a [might]y bl[ow] in order to destroy you [...]. And by his burning wrath [he will send] against you a mighty angel [...] all his co]mmands which [...] pity against you, wh[o ...] over all those who [will send] you to the great pit [and to] deepest [Sheol], and (far) from the ab[ode ...] will lie down, and darkness [...] forever, and [...] with the curse of Aba[ddon ... by] the burning wrath of the L[ord ...] darkness in a[ll ...] tribulations [...] your gift [... the mi]ghty b[low ... ri]ghteousness [...] who [...] the strick[en ...] volunteers of [... Ra]phael will make them whole [...].⁶ (2:1–5:3 [formerly 1:1–4:3])

Third Exorcism Psalm:

A Psalm of David, against [...] in the name of the Lor[d ...] against Resheph [...] he will come to you at ni[ght, and] you will say to him, ‘Who are you? [Withdraw from] humanity and from the ho[ly] race! For your appearance is [nothing], and your horns are horns of sand. You are darkness, not light, [wicked]ness, not righteousness [...] the Lord [...in Had]es most deep, [enclosed in doors] of bronze [...] light and not [...] never again to see] the sun that [shines on the] righteous [...] and then you shall say [...] the righteous to come [...] to do harm to him [...tr]uth from [... righ]teousness to [...]’ (5:4–6:3 [formerly 4:4–5:3]).⁷

Fourth Exorcism Psalm:

¹ [One who dwells] in the shelter of [the Most High, in the sha]dow of the Almighty [he lodges.] ² Whoever says [to the Lord, ‘My refuge] and [my] fortress, [my God (is) my] security in whom [I trust’. ³ For h]e will deliver you from [the snare of the fowl]er, from dea[dly] pestilence. ⁴ [In] his pinions he will cover [you,] and under his [wing]s you will reside. [His] grace (will be) [fo]r you a shield and his truth a buckler. Selah. ⁵ You will not be afraid of the terror of the night (or) the arrow that flies (by) day, ⁶ the plague that rages at noon, (or) the pestilence (which) [in darkn]ess stalks. ⁷ A thousand may fall at your side, or te[n thousand at] your [ri]ght, (but) y[ou] it will n[ot] touch. ⁸ Only [look] with your eyes [and you will se]e the retribution of the wick[ed]. ⁹ You

⁶ Translation based on Sanders, ‘A Liturgy for Healing the Stricken’, pp. 221–27.

⁷ Translation based on Cook, ‘Songs to Disperse Demons’, p. 454.

have [inv]oked [your] ref[uge,] you have [ma]de (him) your delight.¹⁰ You will [not] se[e ... n]or shall [misfortune] touch your [te]nts.¹¹ For he has commanded [...] for you to gua[r]d you on] your [ways],¹² upon (their) palms [they will lift] you up lest [...] your] foot [on a st]one,¹³ (and upon) a serpent [...] you will t]read, you will tramp[le ...] and sea monster.¹⁴ You have [he]ld fast [...] ...¹⁵ ...¹⁶ ... he will sh]ow you [his] salvatio[n ...] And th[ey] shall resp[ond Amen, Amen.] Selah.⁸ (6:4–14 [formerly 5:4–14] = Psalm 91:1–16)

A few brief comments will be helpful. Only a few words and phrases of the first exorcism psalm survive. That it was thought to be Davidic is plausible, but it is only an educated guess. However, the exorcistic orientation of the fragmentary psalm is evident. In line 5 we find the word ‘sea monster’, ‘serpent’, or ‘dragon’ (תנין). The word appears in Ps 91:13, where in the RSV it is translated ‘serpent’. The word ‘demon’ (שד) appears in line 10. In line 7 ‘adjuring’ translates משבֿיע, a word that usually means ‘swearing’ (as in swearing an oath). In the context of exorcism it probably should to be taken in the sense of ‘adjuring’ or ‘exorcising’, as in 11Q11 3:5 (‘adjuring all the angels’) and 4:1 (‘adjuring’).

The opening words of the second exorcism psalm are missing. Perhaps it was originally attributed to David. The name of David’s son Solomon appears in line 2. David’s famous son was well known for his exorcistic skills. We find reference to ‘demons’ (שדים) in lines 3 and 4. The reconstruction ‘prince of hostility’ in line 4 is probable. It may also be translated ‘the Prince of Mastemah’ (שר המשתמה), in reference to a malignant spiritual power often mentioned in the Dead Sea Scrolls. ‘Belial’ (בלעל) is plausibly reconstructed in line 5. As mentioned above, ‘adjuring’ occurs in 3:5 and 4:1. The ‘thousand’ in 3:12 may allude to Ps 91:7, where in the rabbinic and targumic traditions it refers to bands of demons. In 4:7 we have ‘great pit’, in 4:10 ‘curse of Abaddon’ (בקללת האבדון),⁹ and in 5:3 anticipation that ‘Raphael will make them whole’.¹⁰

The third exorcism is clearly identified as belonging to David. In the name of the Lord one can speak (or sing) ‘against’ various demons, including Resheph, an ancient deity, understood to be dangerous and punitive, though also benevolent. Israelites, however, regarded him as a

⁸ Translation based on Sanders, ‘A Liturgy for Healing the Stricken’, pp. 231–33. The superscripted numbers in the translation refer to the verse numbers of Psalm 91, not to the line numbers of 11Q11 col. 6.

⁹ See M. Hutter, ‘Abaddon’, in K. van der Toorn, B. Becking, and P.W. van der Horst, eds., *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible* (rev. ed., Leiden: Brill, 1999), p. 1. The root meaning is ‘destruction’ or ‘place of destruction’. In Rev 9:11 the word appears as a proper name.

¹⁰ Raphael is an angel of healing (cf. Tobit). See M. Mach, ‘Raphael’, in van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, eds., *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, p. 688.

demon (as in Deut 32:24; Ps 78:48).¹¹ The psalm mocks wicked Resheph, asserting in line 7 that his ‘horns are horns of sand’ (קַרְנֵי קַרְנֵי חֲלוֹם). One is reminded of the beast of Daniel 7, which possessed ten horns and fought against the saints (Dan 7:7–8, 21). The author of the exorcism psalm does not fear the horns of Resheph (cf. Ps 75:10 ‘All the horns of the wicked he will cut off’). ‘Satan’ could be reconstructed at the end of line 12.

The fourth exorcism psalm is Psalm 91 (i.e., in the Masoretic Text; it is Psalm 90 in the Greek). There is no attribution in the Hebrew, but in the Greek the psalm is linked to David (τῷ Δαυιδ);¹² so also in the Aramaic: ‘David said, “I will say to the Lord: ‘My refuge and my fortress’”’ (v. 2). The content of Psalm 91 readily lends itself to an exorcistic function. Verse 3 promises deliverance from the ‘deadly pestilence’, while v. 5 promises the faithful person that he will ‘not be afraid of the terror of the night’ or the ‘plague that rages at noon’. The creatures mentioned in v. 13 (‘serpent’, ‘sea monster’, and the like) were sometimes understood as demonic beings. As already mentioned, the ‘sea monster’ (תַּנִּינִי) here in v. 13 also appears in line 5 of the first exorcism psalm.¹³

Psalm 91 in Aramaic

The Psalms Targum has received relatively little scholarly attention, though in recent years that has begun to change.¹⁴ In my very preliminary study I suggested a fifth century date for most of the material for this Targum, though allowing for much later glosses, on the one hand, as well as the

¹¹ See P. Xella, ‘Resheph’, in van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, eds., *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, pp. 700–703.

¹² A. Pietersma (*The Psalms: A New English Translation of the Septuagint* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000], p. 91) renders the opening words αἶνος ᾠδῆς τῷ Δαυιδ: ‘A Laudation. Of an Ode. Pertaining to David’.

¹³ See the important studies by H. Lichtenberger, ‘Ps 91 und die Exorzismen in 11QPsAp^a’, in A. Lange, H. Lichtenberger, and K.F.D. Römhild, eds., *Die Dämonen: Die Dämonologie der israelitischen-jüdischen und frühchristlichen Literatur im Kontext ihrer Umwelt* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), pp. 416–21; Lichtenberger, ‘Qumran and the New Testament’, in I.H. Henderson and Gerbern S. Oegema, eds., *The Changing Face of Judaism, Christianity, and Other Greco-Roman Religions in Antiquity* (Studien zu den Jüdischen Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit 2; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2006), pp. 103–29, esp. 121–26 (‘Spirits and Demons in the Dead Sea Scrolls’). For further points of connection between Psalm 91 and the other exorcism psalms of 11Q11, see Lichtenberger, ‘Qumran and the New Testament’, pp. 123–24.

¹⁴ For brief reports of the history of scholarship, complete with bibliography, see C.A. Evans, ‘The Aramaic Psalter and the New Testament: Praising the Lord in History and Prophecy’, in C.A. Evans, ed., *From Prophecy to Testament: The Function of the Old Testament in the New* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2004), pp. 44–91, esp. 44–75; D.M. Stec, *The Targum of Psalms: Translated, with a Critical Introduction, Apparatus, and Notes* (ArBib 16; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004), pp. 1–26; and T. Edwards, *Exegesis in the Targum of The Psalms: The Old, the New, and the Rewritten* (Gorgias Dissertations 28; Biblical Studies 1; Piscataway NJ: Gorgias Press, 2007), pp. 1–23. Edwards does not discuss Tg. Psalm 91.

presence of much older turns of phrases and exegetical traditions, on the other.¹⁵ In his recently published translation David Stec suggests ‘fourth to sixth century’ and acknowledges that Targum Psalms probably ‘contains material belonging to more than one period’.¹⁶ In this I am sure that he is correct. The language of the Targum seems to be a form of Palestinian Aramaic,¹⁷ and it gives evidence here and there of very old interpretive tradition. The exorcistic orientation of Psalm 91 offers an interesting example of this.

Angelology and demonology in the Psalms Targum is accentuated.¹⁸ It is not absent in the Hebrew Psalter; but it is enhanced and modernised in the Aramaic.¹⁹ Of special interest for the present study is the Targum’s paraphrase of vv. 5–10. The passage begins with David’s words to his son Solomon:

5. לא תדחל מן דלוחא דמוזיקי דאזלין בליליא מן גיררא דמלאך מותא דשרי ביממא:
6. מן מותא די בקיבלא מהלך מסיעת שידין דמחבלין בטיהרא:
7. תדבר שמא דקודשא יפלון מן סמר שמאלך אלפא וריבבותא מן ימינד לותך לא יקרבוך למנוק:
8. לחוד בעיינד תהי מסתכל והיך מיתגמרינ רשיעי תחמ:
9. עני שלמה וכן אמר ארום אנת הוא יהוה רוחצני במדור עילאה שויתא בית שכינתך:
10. אחיב מרי עלמא וכן אמר לא תארע לך בישתא ומכתשא ומוזיקא לא יקרבוך במשכניך:

5. ‘You will not be afraid of the terror of *the demons that go about in the night*, nor of the arrow of *the angel of death that he shoots in the daytime*,

6. nor of the *death* that goes about in the darkness, nor of *the company demons that destroy* at noon.

7. *You will call to remembrance the Holy Name*, and a thousand will fall at your *left* side, and ten thousand at your right hand; (but) *they* will not come near you *to do harm*.

8. You will only look with your eyes, and you will see *how the wicked are being destroyed*.’

9. *Solomon answered, and this is what he said*: ‘Because you, O Lord, are my refuge, *in the most high dwelling place you have set the house of your Shekinah*.’

¹⁵ Evans, ‘The Aramaic Psalter and the New Testament’, pp. 70–75.

¹⁶ Stec, *The Targum of Psalms*, p. 2.

¹⁷ Stec, *The Targum of Psalms*, p. 18. See also E.M. Cook, ‘The Psalms Targum: Introduction to a New Translation, with Sample Texts’, in P.V.M. Flesher, ed., *Targum and Scripture: Studies in Aramaic Translations and Interpretations in Memory of Ernest G. Clarke* (Studies in the Aramaic Interpretation of Scripture 2; Leiden: Brill, 2002), pp. 185–201, here 186–89.

¹⁸ See Stec, *The Targum of Psalms*, p. 6.

¹⁹ For several important studies of the general topic, see Lange, Lichtenberger, and Römheld, eds., *Die Dämonen*.

10. *The Lord of the World responded, and this is what he said: ‘No evil shall befall you, and no plague or demons shall come near your tent.’*²⁰

I offer a few comments. Verses 5–8 constitute part of David’s instructions to his son Solomon. David’s speech begins in v. 2 and includes the assurance in v. 3 that God ‘will deliver you, Solomon my son, from the trap and the snare, from death and tumult’. This assurance anticipates Solomon’s response in v. 9 and the Lord’s added promise in vv. 10–16. The targumic paraphrase reflects a very old tradition of Solomon as healer and exorcist par excellence. This tradition was known to Josephus and was greatly embellished in the pseudepigraphal *Testament of Solomon*, a work that probably originated in first-century Jewish circles and was later expanded and enriched in Christian circles. According to Josephus exorcists in his time made use of spells, incantations, and a special ring thought to derive from Israel’s famous monarch. Amulets and magical papyri from later times attest the popularity of Solomon and his ring. More will be said about Solomon’s reputation shortly.

The Hebrew’s ‘the terror of the night’ in v. 5 becomes in the Targum ‘the terror of the demons [מַזִּיקִין]²¹ that go about in the night’, while ‘the arrow that flies by day’, becomes ‘the arrow of the angel of death that he shoots in the day(time)’. Demons are explicitly referenced elsewhere in Psalm 91 (cf. v. 6: ‘the company of demons [שִׂדִּים] that destroy at noon’; v. 10: ‘no plague or demons [מַזִּיקִין] shall come near your tent’).²² Recall that ‘demons’ (שִׂדִּים) appeared in the first and second exorcism psalms.²³

In v. 5 the arrow becomes the ‘angel of death’, a malevolent being that appears elsewhere in the Psalms Targum:

What man can live and never see death? Who can deliver his soul from the power of Sheol? (Hebr. 89:48 [Eng. 89:49])

Who is the man *who* will live and not see *the angel of death*, who will deliver his soul from *his* hand, *and not go down to his grave* forever? (Targ.)

²⁰ Translation based on Stec, *The Targum of Psalms*, p. 175. Words placed in italics indicate places where the Aramaic differs from the Hebrew.

²¹ מַזִּיקִין, ‘striker’, comes from נָזַק ‘to damage’.

²² See Stec, *The Targum of Psalms*, p. 6.

²³ For more on demons, see G.J. Riley, ‘Demon’, in van der Toorn, Becking, and van der Horst, eds., *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, pp. 235–40; M. Mach, ‘Demons’, in L.H. Schiffman and J.C. VanderKam (eds.), *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (2 vols., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1: pp. 189–92; W. Foerster, “δαίμων,” κ.τ.λ., *TDNT* 2: pp.1–20, esp. 10–16; *Midr. Pss.* 91.3 (on Ps 91:6). שִׂדִּים, whose root meaning is ‘destruction’, is the more common word for demon in biblical literature. It occurs some fifty times in the Hebrew Bible (cf. Deut 32:17; Ps 106:37), about two dozen times in the Scrolls, and about two dozen times in the targums. Both שִׂדִּים and מַזִּיקִין are frequently found in rabbinic literature.

Let not the slanderer be established in the land; let evil hunt down the violent man speedily! (Hebr. 140:11)

The man who speaks with deceitful tongue — they cannot dwell in the land *of the living*; *the angel of death* will hunt down the men of evil rapacity, *he will smite him in Gehenna*. (Targ.)

The association of the angel of death with Gehenna is to be noted. The wicked can expect to be struck down in Gehenna by the angel of death. Demons number among the allies of the angel of death. Accordingly, demons also plague the wicked (cf. *Tg. Ps* 89:32 [Eng. 89:33]).

In v. 7 the ‘thousand’ that fall at the left hand and the ‘ten thousand’ that fall at the right are probably to be understood as bands of demons. Not only does the context in the Psalms Targum suggest this, but this is how the passage is understood in rabbinic interpretation: ‘If a thousand demons should come against a man’s left, they will fall before it . . . even if ten thousand demons should come against the right, they will fall before it’ (*Midr. Pss.* 91.4 [on Ps 91:7]).²⁴

At this point it will help to review the exorcism recounted by Josephus. The wily survivor of the great Jewish rebellion tells of one Eleazar, an exorcist who made use of incantations and various items said to be handed down from Solomon. Josephus says:

Now so great was the prudence and wisdom that God granted Solomon, that he surpassed the ancients, and even the Egyptians . . . And God granted him knowledge of the art used against demons for the benefit and healing of people. He also composed incantations, by which illnesses are relieved, and left behind forms of exorcisms with which those possessed by demons drive them out, never to return. And this kind of cure is of very great power among us to this day, for I have seen a certain Eleazar, a countryman of mine, in the presence of Vespasian, his sons, tribunes, and a number of other soldiers, free men possessed by demons, and this was the manner of the cure: he put to the nose of the possessed man a ring that had under its seal one of the roots prescribed by Solomon, and then, as the man smelled it, drew out the demon through his nostrils, and, when the man at once fell down, adjured the demon never to come back into him, speaking the name of Solomon’s name and reciting the incantations that he had composed.²⁵ (*Ant.* 8.45–47)

²⁴ Translation based on W.G. Braude, *The Midrash on Psalms* (2 vols., YJS 13; London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 2: p. 103. Interpreting the thousands as referring to demons is probably old tradition; claiming that they fall before the ‘Commandment of the Tefillin’ is much later. See also *b. Shebu’ot* 15b.

²⁵ Translation based on H. St. J. Thackeray and R. Marcus, *Josephus* (LCL 281; London: Heinemann; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934), pp. 595–97. For commentary, see C.T. Begg and P. Spilsbury, *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary. Volume 5: Judean Antiquities Books 8–10*

According to Josephus, Israel's famous king and patron of wisdom surpassed even the Egyptians. In context Josephus probably had in mind the Egyptians' fame for magic and exorcism, a fame that grows out of passages like Gen 41:8 and Exod 7:11 (cf. Wis 17:7; 18:13) and is exaggerated in later traditions.²⁶ We are told that the Jewish exorcist Eleazar made use of a ring, under whose seal was a root, and incantations believed to have been composed by Solomon himself. The tradition of Solomon as exorcist and healer begins with 1 Kgs 4:29–34 and was embellished in later traditions such as Wis 7:17–21 and the *Testament of Solomon*. In the latter we are told that an angel gave Solomon a 'ring, which had a seal engraved on precious stone' (*T. Sol.* 1:7). No doubt this ring with a seal is the very ring Eleazar claimed to possess. The tradition of the incantations said to have been composed by Solomon grew out of the story, in which the king interrogated a host of demons, learning from them the ills they caused and how the demons could be thwarted (cf. the whole of the *Testament of Solomon*).²⁷ The root that Eleazar had under the seal of the ring is probably the Baaras root described elsewhere in Josephus. This root is said to be flame-coloured and to emit a brilliant light, killing anyone who mishandled it: 'it possesses one virtue for which it is prized; for the so-called demons . . . are promptly expelled by this root, if merely applied to the patients' (*J.W.* 7.180–86).

Solomon's fame was widespread in late antiquity, among non-Jews as well as among Jews. It is attested in scores of incantation texts, usually found inscribed on amulets or bowls.²⁸ Many of these incantations are written in Aramaic, Syriac, or Mandaean,²⁹ several of which refer to

(Leiden: Brill, 2005), pp. 14–15; R. Deines, 'Josephus, Salomo und die von Gott verliehene τέχνη gegen die Dämonen', in Lange, Lichtenberger, and Römheld, eds., *Die Dämonen*, pp. 365–94, esp. 372–92.

²⁶ For examples: *b. Qidd.* 49b: 'Ten measures of sorcery descended into the world, Egypt received nine, the rest of the world one'; *b. Shab.* 104b: 'Did not Ben Stada bring spells from Egypt?'; and esp. the *Sepher ha-Razim*. See M. Margalioth, *Book of the Mysteries* (Jerusalem: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1966) [Hebrew]. Margalioth dates *Sepher ha-Razim* to the third century, but that is probably too early. See also D.C. Duling, 'Solomon, Exorcism, and the Son of David', *HTR* 68 (1975), pp. 235–52.

²⁷ And also the later *Sepher ha-Razim*; cf. Margalioth, *Book of Mysteries*, p. 26.

²⁸ See C.C. McCown, 'The Christian Tradition as to the Magical Wisdom of Solomon', *JPOS* 2 (1922), pp. 1–24; L.R. Fisher, 'Can This Be the Son of David?' in F.T. Trotter, ed., *Jesus and the Historian* (E.C. Colwell Festschrift; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968), pp. 82–97; C. Isbell, *Corpus of the Aramaic Incantation Bowls* (SBLDS 17; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1975), pp. 33, 108, 110, 114, 117; L.H. Schiffman and M.D. Swartz, *Hebrew and Aramaic Incantation Texts from the Cairo Genizah: Selected Texts from Taylor-Schechter Box K1* (Semitic Texts and Studies 1; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), pp. 74, 80, 125–27; J. Naveh and S. Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1993), pp. 155–56; J.H. Charlesworth, 'Solomon and Jesus: The Son of David in Ante-Markan Traditions (Mk 10:47)', in L.B. Elder, D.L. Barr, and E.S. Malbon, eds., *Biblical and Humane* (J.F. Priest Festschrift; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), pp. 125–51.

²⁹ For collections of texts, see J.A. Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur* (Philadelphia: University Museum, 1913); C.H. Gordon, 'Aramaic Magical Bowls in the Baghdad Museum', *Archiv Orientalní* 6 (1934), pp. 319–34; E.M. Yamauchi, 'Aramaic Magic Bowls', *JAOS* 85 (1965), pp. 511–23;

Solomon, e.g., ‘Charmed and sealed is all sickness . . . by the seal of King Solomon, son of David’³⁰; ‘This is the seal-ring of King Solomon, the son of David . . . Every demon . . . and all roof howlers, lilis [or liliths], and monsters, and all Satans, and idols, and curses . . . are bound and sealed . . . for all his house and all his dwelling, from this day and forever. Amen, Amen, Selah’³¹; ‘Sealed with the seal-ring of El Shaddai, blessed be He, and with the seal-ring of King Solomon, the son of David, who worked spells on male demons and female liliths.’³²

Psalm 91 in the Aramaic presupposes this Solomonic, exorcistic tradition and the demonology that went with it. There is abundant evidence of interest in Solomon, son of David, in the first century as exorcist par excellence.

Jesus and Psalm 91

Having established the antiquity of the exorcistic interpretation of Psalm 91 we may inquire in what ways, if any, this understanding of Psalm 91 is reflected in Jesus’ teaching, apart from the temptation narrative itself.

There is one passage that recommends itself. According to Luke 10:17–20 the disciples return from their mission, saying, ‘Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!’ Jesus replies, saying,

I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven [ἐθεώρουν τὸν σατανᾶν ὡς ἄστραπην ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ πεσόντα]. Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions [δέδωκα ὑμῖν τὴν ἐξουσίαν τοῦ πατεῖν ἐπάνω ὄφεων καὶ σκορπίων], and over all the power of the enemy [ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν δύναμιν τοῦ ἐχθροῦ]; and nothing shall hurt [οὐ μὴ ἀδικήσῃ] you. (vv. 18–19)

Every significant element in this dominical utterance reflect Jewish demonology. The statement that Satan has fallen from heaven presupposes earlier access to heaven, as in Job 1:6–12; 2:1–7; and Zech 3:1–2. His fall

idem, *Mandaic Incantation Texts* (American Oriental Series 49; New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1967), esp. pp. 153–305 (texts and translations).

³⁰ Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, pp. 231–32. See also the discussion in Charlesworth, ‘Solomon and Jesus’ pp. 137–38.

³¹ Gordon, ‘Aramaic Magical Bowls’, p. 322.

³² Ibid., p. 322. For early references to Lilith, usually thought of as a female demon, see 4Q510 frag. 1, line 5 (‘all the spirits of the destroying angels, spirits of the bastards, Lilith, howlers and desert dwellers’); the same in 4Q511 frag. 10, line 1; and 2 Bar. 10:8 (‘I shall call the Sirens from the sea, and you Lilin [or Lilith], come from the desert, and you, demons and dragons from the woods’). The name Lilith also appears in Aramaic incantation bowls; cf. C.H. Gordon, ‘Two Magic Bowls in Teheran’, *Orientalia* 20 (1951), pp. 306–15, esp. 310; Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, p. 190. Indeed, Qumran’s 4Q184, which has been called the ‘Wiles of the Wicked Woman’, is probably not in reference to a mortal woman, but in reference to Lilith herself. So J.M. Baumgarten, ‘On the Nature of the Seductress in 4Q184’, *RevQ* 15 (1991), pp. 133–43, here 140.

from heaven may allude to Isa 14:12 ('How you are fallen [LXX ἐκπίπτειν] from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn!'), which in the Isaiah Targum it seems to be understood as in reference to Satan. According to *Life of Adam and Eve*, the devil reproaches Adam, 'because of you I am expelled and deprived of my glory, which I had in the heavens in the midst of angels, and because of you I was cast out onto the earth' (12:1). Similarly, in 2 *Enoch* we are told that God 'hurled (Satan) out from the height, together with his angels' (29:5; cf. 31:4).

Jesus' claim to have given his disciples authority (δέδωκα ὑμῖν τὴν ἐξουσίαν) 'to tread upon serpents and scorpions' (τοῦ πατεῖν ἐπάνω ὄφεων καὶ σκορπίων) almost certainly alludes to Ps 91:13: 'you will trample down lion and serpent [Old Greek: καταπατήσεις λέοντα καὶ δράκοντα]', a passage that probably underlies the patriarch Levi's pseudepigraphal prophecy of the coming of a faithful priest. It will be a time when 'Beliar shall be bound by him. And he shall grant to his children authority to tread [δώσει ἐξουσίαν τοῖς τέκνοις αὐτοῦ τοῦ πατεῖν] on the wicked spirits' (*T. Levi* 18:12). The author of the *Testament of Levi* has substituted the more literal 'wicked spirits' (τὰ πονηρὰ πνεύματα) for 'lion and serpent' (λέοντα καὶ δράκοντα), the creatures that oftentimes in demonological contexts represent evil spirits. Other parallels should be mentioned: 'Then all the spirits of error shall be given over to being trampled underfoot [πάντα τὰ πνεύματα τῆς πλάνης εἰς καταπάτησιν]. And men will have mastery over the evil spirits' (*T. Sim.* 6:6); and 'He will liberate every captive of the sons of men from Beliar, and every spirit of error will be trampled down [πάν πνεῦμα πλάνης πατηθήσεται]' (*T. Zeb.* 9:8). The closest parallel to Ps 91:13 is *T. Levi* 18:12, where we have 'give authority' and 'tread on the wicked spirits'. It is to this language that Jesus alludes.³³

Joseph Fitzmyer, however, thinks an allusion to Ps 91:13 is 'farfetched'.³⁴ He points out that ὄφης ('serpent', or 'snake'), the word found in Luke 10:19, never renders the ἰχθυόεν ('dragon', or 'sea monster') in the Old Greek. It must be admitted that the evangelist Luke probably has made no allusion to Psalm 91, at least not consciously. If he had, Jesus' saying would have paralleled the Greek version of the psalm more closely. It is more likely that what lies behind Luke 10:19 is a form of Jesus' saying that reflects more than simply the wording of Psalm 91:13, but an interpretative orientation.

³³ So P. Grelot, 'Étude critique de Luc 10,19', *RSR* 69 (1981), pp. 87–100; I.H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), p. 429; J. Nolland, *Luke 9:21–18:34* (WBC 35B; Dallas: Word, 1993), p. 565; M.L. Brown, *Israel's Divine Healer* (Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), pp 359–60, including notes 217–20.

³⁴ J.A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke X–XXIV* (AB 24A; Garden City: Doubleday, 1985), p. 863.

In any event, several words are used in reference to Satan. In Hebrew v. 13b reads: *וְתַרְמֵם בְּפִיר יְתִנֶּיךָ* ('you will tread upon the young lion and the serpent'), which is rendered literally in the Old Greek: καταπατήσεις λέοντα καὶ δράκοντα. The serpent (ὄφης) of Gen 3:1–14 is understood as in reference to Satan, as seen in Paul (2 Cor 11:3 'the serpent [ὁ ὄφης] deceived Eve by his cunning'). Elsewhere Satan (or the devil) is closely associated with the ὄφης (Greek *Life of Adam and Eve* 16:1–4; 17:4; 18:1; 23:4; 25:1; *Rechabites* 20:3; 4 Macc 18:8 'snake of deceit [ἀπάτης ὄφης]'). But Satan is also called a δράκων ('dragon', or 'sea monster'), the very word used in Ps 91:13 (= Old Greek Ps 90:13). Indeed, the author of Revelation calls Satan 'serpent' (ὄφης) and 'dragon' (δράκων): 'And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan [ὁ δράκων ὁ μέγας, ὁ ὄφης ὁ ἀρχαῖος, ὁ καλούμενος Διάβολος καὶ ὁ Σατανᾶς], the deceiver of the whole world — he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him' (Rev 12:9; cf. 13:4; 20:2).

Satan is also called a 'lion': 'Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion [διάβολος ὡς λέων ὠρυόμενος], seeking someone to devour [καταπιεῖν]' (1 Pet 5:8). The allusion could be to Ps 22:13 ('like a ravening and roaring lion'), but 1 Peter may allude to another tradition, one possibly attested in the pseudepigraphal *Joseph and Aseneth*: 'For behold, the wild ancient Lion [ὁ λέων ὁ ἄγριος ὁ παλαιὸς] pursues me; and his children are the gods of the Egyptians that I have cast down and destroyed. And their father the devil is trying to devour me [ὁ πατὴρ αὐτῶν ὁ διάβολος καταπιεῖν με πειράται]' (12:9). The 'ancient lion' is none other the devil, father of the Egyptian gods, who is trying to devour the repentant Aseneth. In the *Testament of Solomon* there are demons who appear as lions (cf. *T. Sol.* 2:3; 11:1).

Jesus also tells his disciples that he has given them authority ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν δύναμιν τοῦ ἐχθροῦ ('over all the power of the enemy'). Elsewhere in the dominical tradition the devil is called 'the enemy' (cf. Matt 13:28–29: 'the enemy who sowed them is the devil' [ὁ δὲ ἐχθρὸς ὁ σπείρας αὐτὰ ἐστὶν ὁ διάβολος]). One is reminded too of what an angry Paul said to Elymas the magician: 'You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness [υἱὲ διαβόλου, ἐχθρὲ πάσης δικαιοσύνης], full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord?' (Acts 13:10). The devil is called 'the enemy' in other Judeo-Christian texts in late antiquity (cf. *Life of Adam and Eve* 2:4; 7:2; 15:1; 25:4; 28:3; 3 *Bar.* 13:2; *T. Dan* 6:2–4). Of great interest is the latter passage, in which reference is made to the 'kingdom of the enemy': 'God . . . will stand against the kingdom of the enemy [τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ

ἐχθροῦ]. . . the kingdom of the enemy [ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ ἐχθροῦ] will be brought to an end' (*T. Dan* 6:2, 4). This hope coheres with the prediction in the *Testament of Moses*: 'Then his (God's) kingdom will appear throughout his whole creation. Then the devil will have an end. . . . For the Heavenly One will arise from his kingly throne' (10:1, 3; cf. Mark 3:26 'And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but has an end').

And finally, the assurance 'nothing shall hurt you' (οὐδὲν ὑμᾶς οὐ μὴ ἀδικήσῃ) alludes to the assurance of Ps 91:9–10: 'Because you have made the Lord your refuge, the Most High your habitation, no evil shall befall you, no scourge come near your tent.' Allusion here is likely, given the understanding of evil and scourge as in reference to evil spirits (as is made clear in the Targum).³⁵

Both Jesus' words in Luke 10:19 and the words attributed to the patriarch in *T. Levi* 18:12 allude to Ps 91:13, a passage that promises that the faithful will tread upon the lion and the serpent underfoot, part of a passage understood as having relevance for exorcism, as we see in 11Q11 and in the Psalms Targum.

The appearance of Psalm 91 in the Matthean and Lukan versions of the temptation of Jesus is but one indication of many that the demonological orientation of this particular psalm in the Psalms Targum derives from early, probably intertestamental tradition. The exorcistic psalms of 11Q11 provide important, early attestation of a tradition that comes to expression in interesting ways in the life and teaching of Jesus.

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³⁵ Brown, *Israel's Divine Healer*, p. 360 n. 219. Brown rightly states that Jesus' assurance 'echoes the spirit' of Psalm 91. The allusion is thematic not verbal.

5

Psalms and the Psalms in Luke's Infancy Narrative

Christoph Stenschke

I. Introduction

One of the welcome trends in New Testament scholarship of the past two decades is the emphasis on the paramount significance of the Old Testament as the 'subtext' for the New Testament. Countless articles and monographs have raised methodological issues surrounding intertextuality, examined individual New Testament books or themes or studied how one particular Old Testament book has influenced and shaped the New Testament as a whole¹ or individual New Testament books.²

For good reasons the Psalms have been at the forefront of this quest. Due to their significance and use in Early Jewish worship, few books of the Old Testament will have been as widely and as deeply known to the Jewish authors and readers of the New Testament as the Psalms (paralleled perhaps only by the Torah).³ Another factor is the sheer size of the Psalms in the Old Testament.

¹ Cf. the series *The New Testament and the Scriptures of Israel: The Psalms in the New Testament* (2004), *Isaiah in the New Testament* (2005) and *Deuteronomy in the New Testament* (2006) and S. Alkier, R.B. Hays, eds., *Die Bibel im Dialog der Schriften: Konzepte intertextueller Bibellektüre*, Neutestamentliche Entwürfe zur Theologie 10 (Tübingen: Francke, 2005).

² For examples cf. R.B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture* (Grand Rapids, Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 2005) and D.W. Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*, WUNT II.130 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).

³ For the significance of the Psalms in Early Judaism and in the New Testament see the surveys of B. Janowski, 'Psalmen/Psalter III. Psalmen außerhalb des Psalters 2. Außerhalb des Alten Testaments', *RGG* 6 (2003), pp. 1775-77; J.H. Charlesworth, 'A Prolegomenon to a New Study of the Jewish Background of the Hymns and Prayers in the New Testament', *JJS* 33, 1982, pp. 265-88; idem, 'Jewish Hymns, Odes, and Prayers (ca. 167 B.C.E. – 135 C.E.)', in R.A. Kraft, G.W.E. Nickelsburg, eds., *Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters*, SBL: The Bible and Its Modern Interpreters (Philadelphia: Fortress; Atlanta: Scholars, 1986), pp. 411-36; idem, 'Prayer in Early Judaism', *ABD* 5 (1992), pp. 499-501; N. Flüglistner, 'Die Verwendung und das Verständnis der Psalmen um die Zeitenwende', in J. Schreiner, ed., *Beiträge zur Psalmenforschung: Psalm 2 und 22*, Forschungen zur Bibel 60 (Würzburg: Echter, 1988), pp. 319-84; D. Flusser, 'Psalms, Hymns and Prayers', in M.E. Stone, ed., *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus*, CRINT II.2 (Assen: Van Gorcum; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), pp. 551-77; H.-J. Kraus, *Psalmen: Theologie der Psalmen*, 2. ed., BKAT 15.3 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1989), pp. 223-57; N. Lohfink, 'Psalmen im Neuen Testament: Die Lieder in der Kindheitsgeschichte bei Lukas' in K. Seybold, E. Zenger, eds., *Neue Wege der Psalmenforschung. FS W. Beyerlin*, 2nd ed., Herders Biblische Studien 1 (Freiburg, Basel, Wien: Herder, 1994), pp. 105-125; K. Löning, 'Die Funktion des Psalters im Neuen Testament', in E. Zenger, ed., *Der Psalter in Judentum und Christentum. FS N. Lohfink*, Herders Biblische Studien 18 (Freiburg, Basel, Wien: Herder, 1998), pp. 269-95.

The 'Index of Quotations (Old Testament Order)' of the UBS *Greek New Testament* (3rd ed., pp. 897f) lists some eighty direct quotations from the Psalms in the New Testament. The 'Index of Allusions and Verbal Parallels' of the UBS *Greek New Testament* (3rd ed., pp. 905f)⁴ offers six columns of references to the Psalms in the New Testament.⁵ These quotations and allusions to the Psalms bear witness to this significant intertextual influence. In several passages in the New Testament, quotations from the Psalms appear not just as ornaments or as proofs of something, but as the very argument in itself: Jesus dies on the cross with Psalm 31:5 on his lips (Luke 23:46). Peter's Pentecost sermon in Acts 2:14-36 is based on some Psalms of David (16: 8-11; 110:1) which testify to the Christian proclamation by foretelling the resurrection of the Messiah.⁶

In view of this significance of the Psalms in New Testament times and in the New Testament itself, it is somewhat surprising that there is only a limited number of prayers or hymns in the New Testament. While there are many references to Jesus or early Christians praying, and some calls to prayer and worship (cf. e. g. Heb 4:16), actual prayers are relatively rare. There are the Lord's prayer of Matthew 6:5-15 and the so-called 'High priestly Prayer' of Jesus in John 17,⁷ the prayers of Paul in Ephesians (1:15-22; 3:14-21) and the worship of saints, martyrs and other beings in the book of Revelation (4:8,11; 5:9f,12f; 8:10,12; 15:3f; 19:1-3,5-8).⁸ A number of passages in the New Testament epistles have been identified by scholars as hymnal confessions and/or prayers which had their *Sitz im Leben* in early Christian worship. Whether this is where these passages

⁴ Cf. M.J. Boda, 'Quotation and Allusion', in S.E. Porter, ed., *Dictionary of Biblical Criticism and Interpretation* (London, New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 296-98; R.B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, London: Yale UP, 1989); D.A. Koch, *Die Schrift als Zeuge des Evangeliums: Untersuchungen zur Verwendung und zum Verständnis der Schrift bei Paulus*, BHT 69 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1986).

⁵ Cf. S. Moyise, M.J.J. Menken, eds., *The Psalms in the New Testament*, The New Testament and the Scriptures of Israel (London, New York: T. & T. Clark, 2004); for an example for a study of New Testament christology which heavily draws on the early Christian exegesis of messianic psalms see A.H.I. Lee, *From Messiah to Preexistent Son: Jesus' Self-Consciousness and Early Christian Exegesis of Messianic Psalms*, WUNT II.192 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005).

⁶ Cf. P. Doble, 'The Psalms in Luke-Acts', in Moyise, Menken, *The Psalms in the New Testament* (83-117), pp. 90-97.

⁷ Cf. J.D.G. Dunn, 'Prayer', *DJG*, pp. 617-25; M. Harding, 'Prayer', in C.A. Evans, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Historical Jesus* (London, New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 461-65.

⁸ For surveys see O. Cullmann, *Das Gebet im Neuen Testament*, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997); W.L. Liefeld, 'Prayer IV. Prayer in the New Testament', *ISBE* 3 (1986), pp. 934-39; cf. also W.B. Hunter, 'Prayer', *DPL*, pp. 25-34; M.J. Wilkins, 'Prayer', *DLNT*, pp. 941-48; R. Gebauer, 'Gebet III. Neues Testament', *RGG* 3 (2000), pp. 488-91; K. Berger, 'Gebet IV. Neues Testament', *TRE* 12 (1984), pp. 47-60; for prayer in Luke-Acts see F.P. Viljoen, 'Jesus as Intercessor in Luke-Acts', *Acta Patristica et Byzantina* 19, 2008, pp. 329-49; for the songs of Revelation see J.W. Watts, *Psalm and Story: Inset Hymns in Hebrew Narrative*, JSOTSup 139 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1992), p. 180.

actually originated or whether they functioned as such is disputed among scholars.⁹

In this paper I want to focus on three prayers in Luke's infancy narrative which closely resemble the Old Testament Psalms and were no doubt inspired by them. If one of these three prayers were read in a church service today without further comment, many in the congregation would assume that the reading came from 'somewhere' in the Psalms – and would not be fully mistaken! These Lukan 'psalms' are not only reminiscent of the Old Testament Psalms in their language and form; they also draw on important themes and the theology of the Psalms.¹⁰

These psalms in Luke's narrative do not come as a surprise to readers familiar with the Old Testament. Several psalms and prayers are embedded in Old Testament narratives, in which the human reaction to the events narrated finds expression.¹¹ They offer pious interpretations of what happened, is happening or will happen. Not only are psalms enclosed in narratives: thirteen of the Psalms of the Psalter (so the MT, more frequently in the LXX) have historical superscriptions describing specific situations in which these psalms were supposed to have been prayed for the first time.¹²

We begin with a survey of the three psalms embedded in Luke's infancy narratives and ask for their content, their indebtedness to the Psalms and for their relationship to the remainder of Luke-Acts. Then we will turn to their function. Why do they appear in Luke's record of the life of Jesus and the early church which is otherwise all narrative (including speech)? Why do they occur here and how do they function in the narrow and in the wider context of the narrative? Important clues come from some

⁹ Cf. R.P. Martin, 'Hymns, Hymn Fragments, Songs, Spiritual Songs', *DPL*, pp. 419-23; M. Lattke, 'Hymnus III. Neues Testament', *RGK* 3 (2000), 1976 and G. Kennel, *Frühchristliche Hymnen?: Gattungskritische Studien zur Frage nach den Liedern der frühen Christenheit*, WMANT 71 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1995).

¹⁰ For a survey of the occurrences and role of the Psalms in Luke-Acts see Doble, 'Psalms'; for the occurrences and significance of the Scriptures for Luke-Acts see Bovon's survey of recent contributions, *Luke the Theologian: Fifty Five Years of Research (1950-2005)* (Baylor University Press, 2006), pp. 525-31.

¹¹ See below and the survey by Watts, *Psalm and Story*.

¹² E. g. Psalm 59 was written by David, 'when Saul ordered his house to be watched in order to kill him'; Psalm 60, 'A Mikdam of David, for instruction' was composed when David 'struggled with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-zobah and when Joab on his return killed twelve thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt'. By these superscriptions events and prayers are closely linked; they add something to the Psalm. However, the reliability and significance of these references is disputed. For a brief survey see Watts, *Psalms and Story*, pp. 182-85; detailed treatment in F.L. Hossfeld, E. Zenger, *Psalmen 51-100*, 3rd ed., HTKAT (Freiburg, Basel, Wien: Herder, 2007). The motivation behind these superscriptions was pietistic in nature (Watts): 'David's inner life was now unlocked to the reader, who was allowed to hear his intimate thoughts and reflections. ... this inner characterization has been noted in the psalms in narrative contexts as well, especially in the individual thanksgivings placed in the mouths of David (2 Sam 22), Hezekiah (Isa 38) and Jonah (Jon 2). Like the psalms with superscriptions, they provide a depth of characterization unknown to Hebrew prose narrative.'

of the psalms that are embedded in Old Testament narratives. I will relate the results of our reading of these Lukan psalms to the overall structure, themes and purpose of Luke-Acts. I argue that these psalms and the people who pray them are intended to serve as representatives of and models for pious Israel. The readers are to rejoice in God's salvation of Israel, in its glorification ('and glory for your people Israel', Luke 2:32) and in the illumination and salvation of the nations ('a light for revelation to the Gentiles', 2:32) which is reported in Acts 8-28. This is followed by a reflection on the meaning of these hymns and their significance for the church today, its worship, ministry and destination in view of God's universal salvation.

II. The Psalms of the Lucan Infancy Narratives

After the preface of Luke's Gospel, which closely follows the conventions of Hellenistic historiography,¹³ the narrative begins with a strong Old Testament flavour. This not only concerns the actual content (drawing on many familiar Old Testament themes, locations such as the Judean hill country and institutions such as the temple of Jerusalem and its priesthood and duties) but also the style of the narrative. Luke's deliberate imitation of the Septuagint gives the whole account a strong Old Testament flavour. Luke does this in order to stress that the events here narrated stand in continuity with the grand narrative of the Old Testament. The time of fulfilment has come. He explains in the preface (1:1) that he gives an account of the things *that have come to fulfilment among us* (πεπληροφορημένον ἐν ἡμῖν πραγμάτων) – using the perfect participle of **וַיְהִי** a word that appears in the New Testament as a *terminus technicus* for the divine fulfilment of prophecy. While Luke sets out to narrate something *new* – the time of fulfilment –, the way in which he goes about it, stresses that this is at the same time a new episode in a story that began long ago and one that will have a great future both for Israel and the nations.¹⁴

¹³ L.A. Alexander, *The Preface to Luke's Gospel: Literary Convention and Social Context in Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1*, SNTSMS 78 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993) and the following essays in B.W. Winter, A.D. Clarke, eds., *Ancient Literary Setting, The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting 1* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1993): D.W. Palmer, 'Acts and the Ancient Historical Monograph', pp. 1-29; B.S. Rosner, 'Acts and Biblical History', pp. 65-82; D. Peterson, 'The Motive of Fulfilment and the Purpose of Luke-Acts', pp. 83-104.

¹⁴ For recent studies of Luke 1f see Bovon, *Luke the Theologian*, pp. 623, 637 and M. Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium*, HNT 5 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), pp. 69-151.

II.1. In response to Gabriel's announcement and to Elisabeth's beatitude in Luke 1:42-45, Mary prays the *Magnificat* of **Luke 1:46-55**.¹⁵

a. Content

The themes are the praise of God for his mercy on his servant Israel and God's promises to the ancestors and their descendants. Mary sets out with her praise and gratitude for God's intervention on *her own behalf* (2:46-49). The Lord God is her Saviour. Because of his mercy on her ('for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant', 48), Mary will be blessed by *all generations* (pa/sai ai geneai), 'for the Mighty One has done great things for me and holy is his name'. In v 50 her prayer includes others: 'His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation (εἰς γενεὰς καὶ γενεὰς)'.

Then she speaks about reversal. God has been merciful, scattering the proud and lifting up the lowly. The hungry have received from his hand, while the rich are left empty handed. The beneficiaries of this reversal – the lowly and the hungry – are Jews. Nothing else is implied by the context. Those whose status and fate will change could include non-Jews. While the 'proud in their hearts and the rich' can also be found in Israel, the powerful on the thrones that will be brought down, *could* be of Gentile origin.

The birth of her son Jesus (1:31-33, the announcement of his exceptional birth and significance as well as its sure fulfilment, 1:37f) is God's help for his servant *Israel*. In this God has remembered his past mercies on Israel according to his covenant faithfulness: 'according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and his descendants forever' (1:55). Mary understands her calling to be a fulfilment of the ancestral promises, recalling Genesis 12:1-3. Her statements about Israel are a reminder of the significance and the spiritual privileges of Israel. What is about to unfold does not question, but affirm these privileges. First and foremost it is the fulfilment of God's mercy to *Abraham and his descendants forever* (εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα). This mercy has not been and will not be recalled.

¹⁵ For detailed treatment of all three hymns see D.L. Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament 3A (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994); F. Bovon, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas (Lk 1.1-9.50)*, EKKNT III.1 (Zürich, Einsiedeln, Cologne: Benzinger; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1989); R.E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, rev. ed., ABRL (London: G. Chapman, 1993); S. Farris, *The Hymns of Luke's Infancy Narratives: Their Origin, Meaning and Significance*, JSNTSup 9 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1985); J.A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (I-IX): Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, 2nd ed., AB 28 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1986); J. Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, WBC 35A (Dallas: Word, 1989) and Wolter, *Lukasevangelium*.

b. The *Magnificat* and the Psalms

Many parallels between Mary's psalm and the Old Testament Psalms and hymns embedded in Old Testament narratives have been noted.¹⁶ The *Novum Testamentum Graece* notes the following parallels from the Psalms for Luke 1:46-55:¹⁷

- 46b: 34:4-6; 35:9
- 48b: Ps 71:17 LXX
- 49: 71:19; 44:4,6; 111:9
- 50: 103:11,17,13; 100:5; 89:2
- 51: 117:15 LXX; 89:11
- 53: 107:9
- 54: 98:3

Mary's prayer also resembles that of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2:1-10 (cf. also 1:11). Hannah praises God for the gift of her son Samuel, born by promise and miracle, who was to become one of Israel's great prophets.¹⁸ Mary's use of Hannah's prayer alerts the readers to the significance of the events and tells them something about Mary and about her unique son (see below). The birth of Mary's child will be no less significant for God's people than the birth of Samuel was. Drawing on these Psalms, Mary praises God for even more than that.

c. The *Magnificat* and Luke-Acts

Mary occurs in a number of places in Luke-Acts up to Acts 1:14, where she is mentioned and named last but presumably thought of as present among the community of Jerusalem from then on.¹⁹ Likewise much of the content of Mary's prayer recurs later on: The themes of reversal and of the restoration of Israel through God's Messiah recurs repeatedly in the ministry of Jesus and in Acts: God's help for Israel, Israel's special relationship with God ('God's servant'); God's faithfulness to his promises, to Abraham and his descendants is demonstrated in Luke-Acts, be it in the

¹⁶ For a survey of the Psalm quotations in Luke-Acts and their significance see Doble, 'Psalms'. Doble concludes: '*Psalms are a precondition of, rather than additional to, Luke's narrative*, confirming that through Jesus God fulfilled his promise to David of a kingdom without end, that the Christ is Jesus' (p. 117). Unfortunately Doble does not treat the psalms of the Lukan infancy narratives.

¹⁷ 27th ed. (1993), 153f. Other cross references to the Old Testament are likewise listed.

¹⁸ Watts, *Psalms and Story*, p. 180: 'The position and contents of the *Magnificat* in particular shows clearly the influence of Hannah's Song ...: it is voiced by a mother in celebration of the gift of a child, its first person praise (Luke 1:46-48) echoes Hannah's sentiments (1 Sam 1:16; 2:1), and the reversal motif dominates its contents (Luke 1:51-54). As with Hannah, the nationalistic and military themes of the psalm are appropriate in Mary's mouth, because they derive from the victory song tradition of Israelite women.'

¹⁹ Cf. V. Limberis, 'Mary 1', in C. Meyers, T. Craven, R.S. Kraemer, eds., *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of the Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Cambridge U.K.: Eerdmans, 2000), pp. 116-19 and J.B. Hood, 'Mary, Mother of Jesus', in Evans, *Encyclopedia of the Historical Jesus*, pp. 394f.

land or in the Jewish Diaspora. With few exceptions these descendants are the addressees of the Christian proclamation (cases of an *exclusive* ministry to *Gentiles* are rare, perhaps even non-existent). The fact that Paul, called to be a light to the nations (Acts 9:15f; 22:21), continues to minister to Israel wherever possible (in Diaspora synagogues and places of prayer) and that Israel is in view to the last chapter of Acts (Jews are the primary, though not exclusive addressees of Paul's ministry in Rome; 28:17-30), indicates that the fulfilment of this promise is primarily to the descendants of Abraham forever. None of Paul's three announcements of the rejection of *some* Israelites (13:46f; 18:6; 28:25-28) implies an outright or definite rejection of Israel. Jews are still in view and addressed in future ministry.

Mary's general statements on piety and reversal are also echoed later in Acts. She confesses that God's mercy is *for those who fear him* from generation to generation (1:50). While the generations of Israel will be in mind, Mary only speaks directly of Israel later on. Is this perhaps a first indication that what is about to happen will not be limited to Abraham's descendants? In Acts 10:35 Peter recognises that 'God shows no partiality, but in every nation *anyone who fears him* and does what is right is acceptable to him'. Later on many Gentile God-fearers, who appear in the context of Diaspora synagogues, come to faith in the Christian proclamation. They function as the link between God fearing Israel and the Gentiles. Should Mary's statements on the proud, the powerful and the rich likewise be read in universal perspective?

II.2. Zechariah's *Benedictus* in Luke 1:68-79 develops the themes of Mary's *Magnificat* and adds fresh perspectives. It is the prophetic prayer of a man filled with the Holy Spirit²⁰: '... was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy' (1:67). It is the psalm of a pious, senior priest who had lost (1:5-23) and just regained his voice through a miracle.²¹

a. Content

God's mercy and deliverance of Israel: The theme of Israel and its salvation recurs at the beginning of Zechariah's psalm: 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has *looked favourably on his people and has redeemed them*' (1:66). The mighty saviour (the 'horn of salvation') who brings this blessing comes from the house of God's servant David (the

²⁰ This is explicitly said of Mary in the context of her *Magnificat*, though it appears earlier on in Luke 1:35.

²¹ 'Zacharias kann erst singen, nachdem seine Zunge durch ein Wunder gelöst ist', N. Lohfink, 'Die Lieder in der Kindheitsgeschichte bei Lukas', in C. Mayer, K. Müller, G. Schmalenberg, eds., *Nach den Anfängen fragen. FS G. Dautzenberg*, Gießener Schriften zur Theologie und Religionspädagogik des FB Ev. und Kath. Theologie und deren Didaktik der Justus-Liebig-Universität 8 (Gießen: Selbstverlag des FB Ev. und Kath. Theologie und deren Didaktik, 1994), (383-404), p. 396.

Lukan infancy narratives abound with Davidic overtones).²² All this happens as it has been announced through God's holy prophets from old (1:70, once more the theme of fulfilment). Verses 71-75 describe the salvation that is envisaged in early Jewish messianic terms as salvation from enemies.²³ In this fulfilment, in his faithfulness and salvation, God has shown the mercy promised to the ancestors and has remembered his holy covenant and his oath to 'our' ancestor Abraham. Rescued from enemies, the people can serve God without fear in holiness and righteousness.

The significance and ministry of John: John will be a prophet of God and will prepare the way of the Lord. Through him, the experience ('knowledge') of salvation will come to God's people Israel *in the forgiveness of their sins*. Here salvation is defined differently than earlier on in v 71-75. God's mercy will shine upon Israel ('us', 78, the 'dawn from on high'), 'to give light to those who sit in the dark and in the shadow of death and to guide *our* feet into the way of peace' (79). The metaphors of darkness and death here refer to Israel. The light will start to come through the ministry of John.

b. The *Benedictus* and the Psalms

The *Novum Testamentum Graece* notes the following parallels from the Psalms for Luke 1:46-55:²⁴

- 68: 41:14; 72:18; 106:48; 111:9;
- 69: 132:17; 18:3 (also drawing on the prayers of Hannah in 1 Sam 2:1,10 and of David in 2 Sam 22:3); 18:1
- 71: 18:18; 106:10 (2 Sam 22:18)
- 72: 105:8f; 106:45
- 73: 97:10
- 79: 106:10,14

c. The *Benedictus* and Luke-Acts

Many of the themes of the *Benedictus* recur in Luke-Acts. There is more on God's redemption and salvation, there is the report of the saviour from the house of David who performs mighty deeds. The theme of fulfilment of

²² Cf. T. R. Hatina, 'David', in Evans, *Encyclopedia of the Historical Jesus*, pp. 130-32 and Y. Miura, *David in Luke-Acts: His Portrayal in the Light of Early Judaism*, WUNT II.232 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), pp. 199-211.

²³ Cf. A. Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation: Jewish Messianic and Visionary Traditions and New Testament Christology*, WUNT 207 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006); M. Hengel, A.M. Schwemer, *Jesus und das Judentum, Geschichte des frühen Christentums I* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), pp. 461-548; G. S. Oegema, 'Messiah/Christ', in Evans, *Encyclopedia of the Historical Jesus*, pp. 399-404; idem, 'Messianism and Messianic Figures in Second Temple Judaism', in Evans, *Encyclopedia of the Historical Jesus*, pp. 406-09 and S.E. Porter, ed., *The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments*, McMaster New Testament Studies (Grand Rapids, Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 2007).

²⁴ 27th ed. (1993), p. 155f. Other cross references to the Old Testament are likewise listed.

prophecy recurs (70), while literal salvation from enemies is absent (for the time being; Acts 1:6f). Also Zechariah's assertion that salvation consists in the forgiveness of sins,²⁵ recurs repeatedly. While the anticipated national deliverance has not (yet) come, salvation from diseases and the power of the devil and forgiveness of sins are freely available to Jews and Gentiles.²⁶

The end of Zechariah's prayer ('light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death') also resounds again, yet on a different note. In Zechariah's prayer ('us ... our feet') 'darkness and the shadow of death' refer to Jews and the light refers to the ministry of John in Israel. Later in Luke-Acts (and elsewhere in early Judaism and in the New Testament) darkness is associated with the Gentiles: they are seen as sitting in darkness and in need of divine illumination.²⁷ The 'darkness' of the Gentiles also appears at the end of Simeon's *Nunc dimittis*.

Those 'of *the way* (of peace)' will not only be Jewish Christians, but also Gentile believers; together they will travel on this way.²⁸

In Luke 2:1-10 the human praise for what is happening is 'interrupted' by the angelic announcement to the shepherds and the praise of the heavenly host in Luke 2:14. Like the hymns of Mary, Zechariah and Simeon, the *Gloria in excelsis Deo* together with the preceding angelic announcement ('to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord') succinctly interprets the events and underlines their significance. The authority of the angel of the Lord, a well-known Old Testament figure, and of the heavenly host to make such statements and sing such praises cannot be surpassed.²⁹

²⁵ Luke's emphasis on the *forgiveness* of sins has rightly been stressed by H. Conzelmann, *Die Mitte der Zeit: Studien zur Theologie des Lukas*, 5th ed., BHT 17 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1964), pp. 212-14.

However, also for Luke sin consists of more than individual sinful *deeds*; cf. M. Kim-Rauchholz, *Umkehr bei Lukas: Zu Wesen und Bedeutung der Metanoia in der Theologie des dritten Evangelisten* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2008), pp. 112-15; C. Stenschke, *Luke's Portrait of Gentiles Prior to Their Coming to Faith*, WUNT II.108 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), pp. 28-33; idem, 'Die Bedeutung der Propheten und des Prophetenwortes der Vergangenheit für das lukanische Menschenbild', *JET* 10, 1996, pp. 123-48 and idem, 'The Need for Salvation', in I.H. Marshall, D. Peterson, eds., *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts* (Grand Rapids, Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 125-44.

²⁶ On salvation in Luke-Acts see I.H. Marshall, *Luke: Historian and Theologian*, 3rd ed. (Exeter: Paternoster, 1988), pp. 77-215; J.B. Green, H.D. Buckwalter, Stenschke and B. Witherington in Marshall, Peterson, *Witness to the Gospel*, pp. 3-166; P. Doble, *The Paradox of Salvation: Luke's Theology of the Cross*, SNTSMS 87 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996) and U. Mittmann-Richert, *Der Sühnetod des Gottesknechts: Jesaja 53 im Lukasevangelium*, WUNT 220 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

²⁷ Cf. Acts 13:47; 26:18; cf. Stenschke, *Luke's Portrait*, pp. 246-48.

²⁸ For the way-motif in Luke-Acts and in Acts as a designation for the Christian movement see M. Völkel, *EWNT II*, (1200-04), pp. 1203f and C.K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles I: Preliminary Introduction and Commentary on Acts I-XIV*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994), p. 448.

²⁹ Cf. M. Görg, 'Engel II. Altes Testament', *RGG* 2 (1999), pp. 1279f; S. A. Meier, 'Angel I', *DDD* (1999), pp. 45-50; J.W. van Henten, 'Angel II', *DDD* (1999), pp. 50-53 and S.A. Meier, 'Angel of Yahweh', *DDD* (1999), pp. 53-59.

Their strong statement of election³⁰ obviously recalls the election of Israel, but also recalls some Lukan statements on the election of (some) Gentiles (cf. Acts 13:48 ‘as many as had been destined for eternal life became believers’ and 18:10 ‘for there are many in this city who are my people’).³¹

II.3. Nunc dimittis (Luke 2:29-32). In the courts of the temple in Jerusalem (2:22-24), the most holy place accessible to the *Jewish* general public, Mary, Joseph and Jesus meet Simeon. Similar to Mary and Zechariah, Simeon is carefully introduced: ‘this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the *consolation of Israel*, and the *Holy Spirit* rested on him’ (2:25). His prayer also is the prayer of an aged man (this can be assumed from the promise given to him in 2:26 and from the beginning of his prayer: ‘Now you are dismissing your servant in peace’). Simeon had received a personal revelation by the *Holy Spirit* that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. Guided by the *Spirit* he came to the temple courts (2:26f). Thus, clearly, Simeon is a man of excellent spiritual credentials. His praise of Jesus is not just that of a human. As Zechariah’s prayer was a priestly and prophetic voice, Simeon’s is a *pneumatical* voice. While the Holy Spirit is also explicitly mentioned before Zechariah’s prayer, its presence and significance is particularly emphasised for Simeon’s *Nunc Dimittis* (three occurrences). This psalm provides a Spirit-initiated and Spirit-guided interpretation of the identity and significance of Mary’s son. It is the climax of the three hymnic interpretations of the events that now come to fulfilment.

a. Content

Like Mary’s prayer, Simeon starts on a personal note. According to the word of God (mentioned in 2:26) which has come to fulfilment now, Simeon can be ‘dismissed’ in peace, because now he has seen the salvation which God has prepared in the presence of all peoples. Simeon’s scope is universal: *all peoples* (2:31, πάντων τῶν λαῶν). How the peoples will benefit from this salvation is described in v 32: it will be a light for revelation to the Gentiles who are seen as living in darkness and in need of divine illumination.³²

³⁰ Cf. the discussion in Stenschke, *Luke’s Portrait*, p. 280f.

³¹ For both see Stenschke, *Luke’s Portrait*, pp. 283-88, 293f. In excluding the *Gloria in excelsis* from consideration I follow the arguments of Farris, *Hymns*, p. 12. For more detailed treatment of Luke 2:10-12 see Lohfink, ‘Lieder’, *passim* who includes it in his assessment of the Lukan psalms.

³² For metaphorical darkness of the nations in the Old Testament, in Early Judaism and in the New Testament cf. H. C. Hahn, ‘Licht/Finsternis’, in L. Coenen, K. Haacker, eds., *Theologisches Begriffslexikon zum Neuen Testament II*, rev. ed. (Wuppertal: Brockhaus; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2000), pp. 1307-10 and Stenschke, *Luke’s Portrait*, pp. 246-48.

One might expect that God's salvation would be portrayed as having similar effects on Israel. Yet Simeon does not go on to describe the spiritual benefits for Israel (such as 'knowledge of salvation ... by the forgiveness of their sins', 1:77; divine light and guidance into the way of peace, 1:78f; both elements recur in the ministry to Israel). Rather, what God is doing through this saviour for the nations will bring '*glory to your people Israel*'. God's people will not be by-passed or left empty-handed when the nations will benefit from this salvation.³³ '... the Gentiles do not replace Israel in the *Nunc Dimittis*; they receive mercy alongside Israel'.³⁴ On the contrary: what God will initiate among the Gentiles will serve and *enhance Israel's status as God's people*.³⁵

In Simeon's prayer this glorification of Israel is not dependent on Israel's own response in faith to God's Christ: the inclusion of the nations in God's salvation glorifies the status of those first and foremost addressed by it. It is also noteworthy that Simeon leaves open the precise relationship between the revelation to the Gentiles and the glory to God's people Israel. He does not indicate that the illumination of the Gentiles will lead them to become God-fearers who join Israel as proselytes and in this way enhance its status, as had happened in many cases in the past.³⁶ In Simeon's vision, *the Gentiles* apparently do not lose their identity when they benefit from God's salvation for the descendants of Abraham. However, neither does *Israel*. Both groups of humanity benefit, each in its own way.

b. The *Nunc dimittis* and the Psalms

In comparison to the *Magnificat* and the *Benedictus*, for Simeon's *much shorter* psalm the margin of the *Novum Testamentum Graece* notes only two parallels: in v. 30 it refers to Psalms 98f and 67:3. Rather, Simeon's prayer draws strongly on the latter half of the book of Isaiah.³⁷ This is also

³³ Farris, *Hymns*, p. 150 notes: 'The saviour will also bring glory to Israel. It was thought that in the last days God would give glory to Israel (Isa 46:13; 60:1,19). This expectation had now been fulfilled'.

³⁴ Farris, *Hymns*, p. 159.

³⁵ Although the following words to Mary indicate that Jesus will be opposed by the people (2:34f), 'there seems ... to be no hint in the infancy hymns of the rejection of the gospel by some Jews. While Luke 2:34f seems clearly to speak of a division within Israel, the hymns themselves look only on the more joyful side of salvation history. They anticipate only "the tens of thousands faithful to the law" of Jerusalem (Acts 21:20)', Farris, *Hymns*, p. 159.

³⁶ This may be expected from some Old Testament eschatological texts which envision the nations coming to Zion; on these passages see E.J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission I: Jesus and the Twelve* (Downers Grove: IVP; Leicester: Apollos, 2004), pp. 76-89; V. Haarmann, *JHWH-Verehrer der Völker: Die Hinwendung von Nichtisraeliten zum Gott Israels in alttestamentlichen Überlieferungen*, ATANT 91 (Zürich: TVZ, 2008) and S. Riecker, *Ein Priestervolk für alle Völker: Der Segensauftrag Israels für alle Nationen in der Tora und den Vorderen Propheten*, SBB 59 (Stuttgart: KBW, 2007).

³⁷ Says Farris, *Hymns*, p. 146: '... it is a mosaic of OT allusions. However, the allusions in Simeon's song are drawn from Deutero-Isaiah rather than primarily from the Psalter as is the case in the first two infancy hymns. These allusions are artfully woven together into a hymn of suppressed rapture and vivid intensity.'

caused by the content: the first half of the psalm is Simeon's personal thanksgiving and expression of readiness to now depart. On the other hand, God's long term preparation of salvation *before all the nations* (πάντων τῶν λαῶν) is – though perhaps not in a clear verbal parallel – in view in the Psalm. The nations which appear as recipients of revelatory light in the *Nunc Dimittis* also have their role in the Psalms.³⁸

c. The *Nunc dimittis* and Luke-Acts

The summary of God's intervention through Jesus as *salvation* sounds a theme of crucial importance to Luke-Acts. Luke describes how this salvation developed and was accomplished for Israel and for the Gentiles. The universal scope of salvation ('in the presence of all peoples') likewise recurs. In addition to Israel, some Gentiles witness and benefit from God's salvation in the earthly Jesus.³⁹ The resurrected Jesus tells his disciples that the purpose of God is the proclamation of repentance and forgiveness of sins to all nations, *beginning from Jerusalem* (24:47; everything written ... in the Law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled. ... Thus it is written ... and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations').⁴⁰ In Acts 1:8 the disciples are commissioned to be witnesses 'in Jerusalem, in all Judaea and Samaria and to *the ends of the earth*'. In both cases and in the account of Acts as a whole, it is clear that this God-intended movement will not and is not to bypass Jerusalem and Israel. From restored Israel the Gospel is to take its course to the nations. The Gentiles hear of this salvation, believe in it and thus receive God's light.

The *location* of Simeon's prayer is significant, as is the location of the other psalms: Gabriel meets Zechariah within the actual temple building in Jerusalem. Zechariah sings his praises in a Jewish priestly home in the Judean hill country (1:39; cf. 1 Sam 1:1; 2 Sam 2:1). Mary's *Magnificat* is likewise situated there (1:39,56). The fulfilment of what was announced in the temple and in Nazareth is celebrated there. With Simeon's prayer the narrative returns to the courts of the temple of Jerusalem (2:27), which is the holiest place where non-priestly Jews (Simeon, Joseph, Mary and Jesus) can be and the closest they can come to God. The locations of Luke's hymns – a priestly home in the Judean hill country and the temple of Jerusalem – are as Jewish and as beyond reproach as they can possibly be.

³⁸ For a survey of the nations in the Psalms see Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission I*, pp. 75f.

³⁹ Cf. the survey in Stenschke, *Luke's Portrait*, pp. 104-11.

⁴⁰ C.J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2006) has rightly emphasised that the fulfilment of Scripture is not limited to the fate of Jesus but also includes world-wide mission; cf. my review in *Missionalia* (in print).

The temple will continue to play a significant role in Luke-Acts.⁴¹ It is there, in the place where Simeon announced that this salvation will be a revelatory light to the Gentiles, that Paul on his first visit to the city following his calling (cf. Acts 9:26-30), prays, has a vision and receives the commission from the exalted Christ to go to these Gentiles (21:17-21: 'Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles'). During these journeys Paul understands his mission as bringing light to the Gentiles ('... for the Lord commanded *us*, saying "I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles, so that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth"', Acts 13:47). Paul the missionary to the Gentiles will continue to return to this temple (probable in Acts 18.22: 'he went up (to Jerusalem) and greeted the church'). He will go there to publicly complete the days of purification (21:26). Paul continues to honour this earthly centre and manifestation of the glory of Israel. In the courts of the temple Paul will almost be lynched, arrested by the Romans and (halfway between the Jewish people in the temple courts below and the Romans above in the *Antonia* – the precise location is hardly coincidental!) deliver a public apology for his life and disputed ministry. Thus from the very centre of pious Israel comes Simeon's psalm and Paul's commission. This is the place where the latter almost comes to a bodily end.

Luke also recounts how the 'glory for God's people Israel' came to pass. This happens in the ministry of Jesus, in his resurrection and exaltation, in the gathering and restoration of Israel before and after Easter (particularly expressed in the calling of the twelve disciples in Luke 6:12-15 and Acts 1:15-26), in the Jerusalem Messianic community of Acts and later on in the Diaspora of the Eastern Mediterranean.⁴² To this re-gathered and restored Israel, the Gentiles may come and join in *as Gentiles* in accordance with the Scriptures of Israel (Acts 15:15-19). Salvation is for the Gentiles – without by-passing Israel!

⁴¹ The temple later occurs in Acts 24:6,12,18; 26:21; cf. J. Adna, 'Tempel III. Christlicher Umgang mit dem Tempel in Jerusalem', *RGG* 8 (2005), p. 149f; S. Westerholm, 'Temple', *ISBE* 4 (1988), (759-76), pp. 775f and M. Bachmann, *Jerusalem und der Tempel: die geographisch-theologischen Elemente in der lukanischen Sicht des jüdischen Kultzentrums*, BWANT 9.6 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1980).

⁴² Cf. Farris, *Hymns*, pp. 154-58; J. Jervell, *The Theology of the Acts of the Apostles*, New Testament Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), pp. 18-115; idem, *Die Apostelgeschichte*, KEK 3 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998; cf. my review in *JBL* 119, 2000, 141-44), pp. 86-105 and C. Stenschke, 'Some Comments on a Recent Study of the Characterisation of Judaism and the Jews in Luke-Acts: An Extensive Review of Günter Wasserberg, *Aus Israels Mitte - Heil für die Welt: Eine narrativ-exegetische Studie zur Theologie des Lukas*, BZNW 92 (Berlin, New York: W. de Gruyter, 1998)', *CV* 43, 2001, pp. 244-66.

III. The significance and function of the Psalms of the Infancy Narratives and for the Purpose of Luke-Acts

After this survey of the hymns of Luke's infancy narratives, we now ask for their significance and function in their immediate context as well as for all of Luke-Acts and its purpose.

III.1. Development of thought in the *Magnificat*, the *Benedictus* and the *Nunc dimittis*

Luke's psalms should be seen together as there is a noteworthy progression of thought in them:⁴³ they move from Mary's reflection of her own calling and new status of blessedness, over God's mercy and covenant faithfulness to Israel and the ministry and significance of John the Baptist to universal salvation from which the Gentiles and Israel will benefit – each in their own way. The *Benedictus* picks up themes from the *Magnificat* and the *Nunc Dimittis* draws on the *Magnificat* and the *Benedictus*.

There is a movement in praise from Israel and its salvation to the Gentiles: Mary speaks of God's help for his servant Israel (1:54); Zechariah praises God for looking favourably on his people and redeeming them (1:68). The mighty saviour whom God is about to raise is for 'us' (1:69; 'we' in v. 71; 'our ancestors', 72f; Abraham in 1:73). Angels announce to the shepherds of Bethlehem that this event is good news to *all the people* of Israel (2:10; on 2:14 see above). Simeon praises the salvation which God has prepared in the presence of *all peoples* (2:31 πάντων τῶν λαῶν). It is a light of revelation for the Gentiles and of glory for God's people Israel. The psalms *begin* with God's help for *Israel* (1:54 – after Mary's reflections on herself in v 46-49 and general reflection on reversal without direct identification of the recipients in v. 50-53) and *end* with the glory of *Israel* in the wake of God's universal salvation.⁴⁴ Lohfink rightly concludes:

The hymns ... do not appear to be fully independent of each other. If taken together, they complement each other and together constitute a messianology based on Old Testament notions and striving for comprehensiveness in its range. This messianology is at the same time

⁴³ This development resembles the development of the narrative of Luke 1f. However, the psalms speak of the future significance and reception of this salvation in a manner that is not apparent otherwise in the narrative.

⁴⁴ Watts, *Psalms and Story*, p. 180 concludes: 'The psalms' contents proclaim a general theme of the Gospel, that God is acting to save God's people'. Lohfink, 'Lieder', p. 401 summarises as follows: '...von seinen verhaltenen, armentheologischen Anfängen im *Magnificat* über die davidisch-königliche Messianologie des *Benedictus* bis ins Völkerwallfahrtsthema des Abschlusses, das den Frieden in den Mittelpunkt stellt'.

'ecclesiology'. ... Also the ... hymns are obviously interlinked with each other.⁴⁵

Development in these three psalms is not surprising. In recent research on the Psalter some scholars have argued for patterns extending beyond individual psalms or even collections of Psalms.⁴⁶ Lohfink summarises: 'It becomes evident, that the Psalter is not a mere collection of independent individual psalms. Rather it wants to be a continuous text. As *such* it has a message, which is *more* than the sum of the messages of its individual pieces'.⁴⁷ Lohfink lists several examples of such links by content.⁴⁸ In some cases the end of one psalm explicitly introduces the next psalm or a whole group of psalms.⁴⁹ 'So psalms adjoining each other or also whole groups of psalms are firmly linked with each other in most different ways, often even through their common content'.⁵⁰ It has also been proposed that Psalm 1 serves as an introduction to the entire Psalter.⁵¹ For Lohfink the *Sitz im Leben* of such links is the 'meditating – murmuring person who prays the psalms'.⁵² He concludes:

The exegetes of the previous century [i.e. the nineteenth century] still knew of this interrelatedness of the psalms. Then however, it was forgotten, certainly also through scholarly attention on matters of genre.

⁴⁵ 'Lieder', pp. 397f (translated from German). Lohfink sees the psalms of 1 Samuel 2 and 2 Samuel 22 as an Old Testament model for such a *Verkettung*: 'In den lukanischen Kindheitsgeschichten ist es nachgeahmt und zugleich weiterentwickelt. Die Verkettung ist vor allem lexematisch. ... Sie stehen überdies enger beieinander als die beiden Hymnen, die weit entfernt voneinander die Samuelsbücher rahmen. Die Verkettung kann also dem Leser viel leichter bewusst werden, falls er überhaupt ein Ohr für derartige literarische Techniken hat', p. 398f; cf. the detailed examination by H. Klement, *II Samuel 21-24: Context, Structure and Meaning in the Samuel Conclusion*, Europäische Hochschulschriften XXIII Theology 682 (Frankfurt, Berlin, Bern: Lang, 2000), pp. 112-14. Lohfink moves on to list 'die wichtigsten verkettenden Elemente' (pp. 399-401). As we have seen, many of the themes of these psalms and of the movement we suggest reappear in Luke-Acts.

⁴⁶ See the survey in Lohfink, 'Lieder', pp. 383-87. Lohfink and others speak of 'Verkettungen'; cf. G. Barbiero, *Das erste Psalmenbuch als Einheit: Eine synchrone Analyse von Psalm 1-41*, Österreichische Biblische Studien 16 (Frankfurt, Berlin, Bern: Lang, 1999); E.S. Gerstenberger, 'Der Psalter als Buch und als Sammlung', in Seybold, Zenger, *Neue Wege der Psalmenforschung*, 3-13; J. Clinton McCann, ed., *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, JSOTSup 159 (Sheffield: Sheffield AP, 1993), pp. 72-82; E. Zenger, 'Der Psalter als Buch', in Zenger, *Der Psalter in Judentum und Christentum*, pp. 1-57; cf. also the survey in K. Seybold, 'Psalmen/Psalmenbuch I. Altes Testament', *TRE* 27 (1997), (610-24), pp. 618-20.

⁴⁷ 'Lieder' (translated from German), p. 385.

⁴⁸ '... inhaltlich miteinander verkettet', *Ibid.*, p. 385f.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 386.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* (translated from German), p. 386.

⁵¹ Cf. R. G. Kratz, 'Die Tora Davids: Psalm 1 und die doxologische Fünfteilung des Psalters', *ZTK* 93, 1996, pp. 1-34; B. Weber, 'Psalm 1 and Its Function as a Directive Into the Psalter and Towards a Biblical Theology', *OTE* 19, 2006, pp. 237-260 and B. Janowski, 'Freude an der Tora: Psalm 1 als Tor zum Psalter', *EvT* 57, 2007, pp. 18-31; cf. also B. Janowski, 'Psalmen/Psalter II. Altes Testament', *RGG* 6 (2003), (1762-74), pp. 1769-72. B. Weber argues that Psalm 1 and 2 function together as 'a gate to the Psalms with a two-wing door', namely faithfulness to the law and faithfulness to the anointed and his kingdom, in 'Psalm 1 als Tor zur Tora JHWHs: Wie Ps 1 (und Ps 2) den Psalter an den Pentateuch anschliesst', *SJOT* 21, 2007, pp. 179-200.

⁵² 'Lieder', p. 386.

We are therefore at work to re-discover the ‘concatenation of the psalms’. We are only starting to spell out how these concatenations function in the constitution of meaning. Linguistic signals which appear very much on the surface of the texts produce an interrelatedness of texts that are in themselves heterogeneous. In this way a whole range of meaning comes into being. One individual text with its unequivocal meaning and linear structure could not have produced the many dimensions of this range. The meditating – murmuring persons praying these psalms – grasp more than what the individual psalm which they are reciting may comprise on its own.⁵³

In comparison we find in Luke 1f a development of thought over three psalms that occur *in a narrative* and with narrative sections in between each of the psalms (for an Old Testament parallel see below).

III.2. Psalms in narratives: an Old Testament pattern

For assessing the indebtedness of Luke’s psalms to the Old Testament Psalms and their function in Luke’s narrative (for the immediate and wider context) we need to consider a close literary parallel: the psalms, hymns and prayers (from here onwards ‘psalms’) that are embedded in Old Testament narratives.⁵⁴ James Watts speaks of ‘narratively inset psalmody’.⁵⁵ A number of substantial psalms occur in Old Testament narratives.⁵⁶

First there is the song of Moses and the Israelites after crossing the Red Sea and the destruction of their Egyptian foe (Exod 15:1-18) as well as the following shorter song of Miriam in Exodus 15:22. There is the extensive song of Moses at the end of his life in Deuteronomy 32:1-43. Deborah and Barak sing to God after the victory is accomplished (Judg 5:1-31). In many ways parallel to Mary’s *Magnificat* is the psalm of Hannah after she dedicated her son Samuel to the Lord (1 Sam 2:1-10). There is

⁵³ ‘Lieder’ (translated from German), p. 387.

⁵⁴ Cf. F. Hartenstein, ‘Psalmen/Psalter III. Psalmen außerhalb des Psalters 1. Im Alten Testament’, *RGK* 6 (2003), p. 1774f. Watts, *Psalm and Story*, pp. 206-20 offers a survey of psalms embedded in other Ancient Near Eastern literature.

⁵⁵ *Psalm and Story*, p. 12. We leave aside the observation that several psalms in the Psalter begin in their superscription with a brief description of the particular life situation in which they originated – thus they are also placed in a particular context, although they do not appear in the narrative accounts of these events. These ‘headlines’ indicate that narrative and psalms, God’s dealings with his people and their response in lamentation and praise (C. Westermann) are closely related in Hebrew thought. The time of origin and historical value of these descriptions is disputed.

⁵⁶ For questions of definition and criteria for selection see Watts, *Psalm and Story*, pp. 14-17. Our list differs from Watts; cf. the detailed treatment of most of these prayers by Watts, pp. 19-168. Prayers of supplication such as Solomon’s prayer on the occasion of the dedication of the temple in 2 Chronicles 6:1-42f are not included here. Other poetic texts embedded in narratives are not prayers, such as, for instance, David’s lament over the death of Jonathan in 2 Samuel 1:19-26; for a full survey of all poetic texts in Old Testament narratives see S. Munos Iglesias, *Los Evangelios de la Infancia I: Los Cánticos del Evangelio de la Infancia según Lucas*, 2nd ed., BAC 508 (Madrid: BAC, 1990), pp. 25-60.

David's long prayer 'on the day when the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul' in 2 Samuel 22:1-51 (cf. his last words in 1 Sam 23:1-7).⁵⁷ 1 Chronicles 16:8-36 reports the song performed by Asaph and his kindred on the day David first appointed the singing of praises to the Lord. There is Nehemiah's prayer of repentance and supplication (1:5-11; cf. also 9:5-38). Daniel praises God for revealing the king's dream to him (2:20-23). Later king Nebuchadnezzar comes to acknowledge and praise God (4:34-37). Jonah prays a psalm in the belly of the beast (2:1-11). In the narrative Old Testament Apocrypha there are embedded prayers by Tobit (3:2-6, 11-15; 8:5-8, 15-17; 11:14f, chapter 13); Mattathias in 1 Maccabees 2:6-13 (3:50-53; 14:4-15, Azariah (LXX between Dan 3:23 and 24 MT) and Judith's praise of God's deliverance at the end of the book of Judith 16:1-17.⁵⁸

Time and space do not allow a detailed discussion of any of these prayers or of their function in their particular contexts. This has been accomplished in the detailed study of Watts. Like the psalms of the Lukan infancy narratives, these psalms are indebted to the Old Testament Psalter, as the parallel references aptly indicate. B. Wellmann's conclusion for the prayer of Jonah (Jonah 2:1-11), also applies to the other Old Testament narratively inset psalmody:

The prayer... contains a wealth of references to the Psalter. The narrator has Jonah speak *with pious language* and creates from many pieces a new psalm. Through this use of traditional elements of prayer *Jonah is introduced as belonging to the community of Israel*, even though earlier on he wanted to abandon his God and his own prophetic calling.⁵⁹

Later on she notes: 'Through the language of the psalms Jonah's prayer *develops its force for the Jewish readers of that time*. Jonah speaks their language....'⁶⁰

Hermann Gunkel argued that such psalms merely serve as ornaments to Old Testament narratives: '...it has been the custom of the Old Testament to embellish narratives with poetic passages, which were placed

⁵⁷ Cf. the detailed discussion in Klement, *II Samuel*, pp. 110-14, 198-211.

⁵⁸ For a brief treatment of apocryphal narratively inset psalmody see Watts, *Psalms and Story*, pp. 175-79. He observes: 'The practice of placing psalms and other poetry into narrative contexts did not come to an end with the last book of the Hebrew Bible. If anything, it became more pervasive in later literature. These later uses of psalms within prose narrative had many points of continuity with the practice in the Hebrew Bible, but new conventions also emerged' (p. 175). For poetry in 1 Maccabees, the so-called *Psalms of Joshua* or *Apocryphon of Joshua* (4Q379 and 4Q379, quoted in 4Q175) and in Ps.-Philo, *L.A.B.* see Watts, *Psalms and Story*, p. 178f.

⁵⁹ 'Ein Gebet aus dem Bauch des Fisches', *Bibel heute* 44, 2008, (p. 15f) 15 (translated from German), italics CS.

⁶⁰ 'Gebet' (translated from German), p. 16.

on the lips of the main protagonists'.⁶¹ Against this estimate Lohfink rightly argues: 'It is probably too simple to claim that such "psalms" occurring within narrative texts serve only for embellishment... "Embedded psalms" are more than decoration. They carry semantic weight'.⁶² Lohfink notes that these psalms do not serve to move on the plot of the narrative.⁶³ Watts argues that the psalms in Old Testament narratives invite the readers/hearers to join in. Together with the devout protagonists of the narratives they are to praise Yahweh (see below).

Two observations are in order:

a. The character of the people at prayer.

What do the people who pray these psalms in Old Testament narratives have in common? With the exception of Jonah, they are very commendable figures, and even Jonah – between his own repentance and his reluctant response to the repentance of the Ninevites – eventually fulfils his divine calling, though without enthusiasm. The people at prayer represent Israel's best and most pious men and women, both kings and humble folk. The Nebuchadnezzar of Daniel 1-3 is not in the category of 'Israel's best'. But by chapter four of the Book of Daniel, helped on his way and coached by Daniel and his God, Nebuchadnezzar has learnt a hard lesson and is portrayed as a devout God-fearer. His conclusion in chapter 4:34-37 is as reverent and as Jewish as it can be.

These embedded psalms tell something about the people who pray them. They speak in pious language and belong to the people of Israel (Wellmann). They have achieved great things and/or have experienced God's salvation.

Lohfink argues that such psalms do *not* serve to characterise the people who pray them: 'If someone is indeed "characterised" in these embedded psalms, then it is not the people who pray them. Rather it is God whose praises are sung and who by all means has a role to play in these narratives'.⁶⁴ Rather their purpose is 'characterisation of the divine protagonist'. At the same time Lohfink notes that the people at prayer are

⁶¹ So the summary of Gunkel's argument by Lohfink, 'Lieder' (translated from German), p. 384.

⁶² 'Lieder' (translated from German), p. 384; similarly Watts, *Psalms and Story*, p. 186: '... in the Hebrew Bible, the use of psalms in narrative contexts is a literary device used to achieve compositional (narrative) goals. ... The psalms achieve compositional goals in two ways: by their positions in the narrative and by their thematic contents.'

⁶³ 'Lieder', p. 388: '... so läßt sich durchgehend sagen, dass die eingebetteten Psalmen nicht dazu dienen, die Handlung voranzutreiben. Im Gegenteil, sie sind Ruhepunkte der Handlung. Oft befinden sie sich auch am Ende einer Handlungseinheit oder gar der Gesamthandlung, dienen also nicht der Spannungserhöhung durch Handlungsstau ('plot break').'

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 389.

'all, male or female, something like inspired prophets. Their psalms open up new horizons'.

Here I part with Lohfink's otherwise persuasive survey and conclusions. His conclusions on embedded psalms and characterisation appear to be unduly influenced by his reading of Hannah's⁶⁵ and Jonah's psalm. The case should be argued differently: that God is the focus of these psalms and this 'God focus' characterises the people who pray them.⁶⁶ They have a theocentric perspective,⁶⁷ in addition to their being 'inspired prophets' (Lohfink). By their prophetic prayers and by the way in which they are described in the context of these prayers, the people who pray them are indeed characterised.⁶⁸

With this argumentation I follow Watts. For each of the psalms under his consideration, Watts examines 'the psalm's contribution to the characterization of its speaker(s) and sometimes other characters in the narrative ...'.⁶⁹ On 1 Samuel 2:1-10 – the first psalm treated by him in detail – Watts observes: 'What a character says is one of the ways in which a story provides readers with a sense of who the person is, so ten verses containing Hannah's words can be expected to contribute to her characterization'.⁷⁰ Watts also examines the depiction of Hannah in 1 Samuel 1, where her main traits seem to be an emotional piety and faithfulness: 'The placement of the psalm in her mouth thus *expands her characterization considerably*. The readers are no doubt meant to conclude from the combination of poem and narrative that Hannah's wisdom and insight are a direct result of her piety'.⁷¹ He also notes that the psalms also characterise Yahweh, who is praised in them ('serving to characterize God and their speakers').⁷² Watts concludes:

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 388.

⁶⁶ On 1 Samuel 2:1-10 Lohfink, 'Lieder', p. 390 notes: 'Kein Zweifel, dass hier auf die kommenden zwei Bücher vorausgegriffen wird. Hier singt nicht Hanna. Aus ihr singt der alles schon schauende göttliche Geist'. Yet the words are not presented as a prophetic oracle but appear as a prayer on Hannah's lips. By this vision she is characterised.

⁶⁷ Watts, *Psalms and Story*, p. 190 notes: 'All nine psalms focus attention on God ... The effect of these psalms on their narrative contexts is to point out to readers God's underlying knowledge and control of events, thus turning the stories into examples of how God cares for God's people'.

⁶⁸ S. Bar-Efrat speaks of 'The Indirect Shaping of the Characters' by speech, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, Bible and Literature Series 17 (Sheffield: Almond, 1989), pp. 64-77 (detailed discussion); for various techniques of characterisation in Hebrew narrative cf. also R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981), pp. 114-30.

⁶⁹ *Psalms and Story*, p. 17. Watts examines the characterisation of the people at prayer for each of the psalms he includes, pp. 51-55, 72f, 90f, 107-09, 124f, 135-40, 147-49, 160f.

⁷⁰ *Psalms and Story*, p. 29.

⁷¹ *Psalms and Story*, p. 30f; italics CS. After surveying the LXX version, the story in the *Targum Jonathan* of 1 Samuel and in the *L.A.B.* of Ps.-Philo, Watts, *Psalms and Story*, p. 31f, concludes: 'Thus there is evidence that ancient readers were aware of all the aspects of the psalm's characterization of Hannah discussed above, and often enhanced them in their transmission or adaptations of the text'.

⁷² *Psalms and Story*, p. 193.

Psalms in narrative contexts invariably characterize their speaker(s), indirectly if not by direct description. Such characterization is the dominant factor in the narrative roles of 2 Samuel 22, Isaiah 38, Jonah 2, and Tobit 13, which cast the piety of David, Hezekiah, Jonah and Tobit *in the familiar language of the psalms so that the readers can identify themselves in these figures*. The non-specific and stereotyped imagery of these psalms, which has led many interpreters to complain of their lack of connection to their contexts, makes the poems, and through them the stories of their speakers, available to readers as paradigms for their own religious experience . . . these songs actualize the narrative for readers, but on a more personal and intimate level. Their characterization of the speaker is thus not the clear-cut, indelible depiction of a unique personality for which narrative characterization often strives, but it is rather a metaphorical and allusive portrait within which readers can find both themselves and the story's main characters.⁷³

b. The nature of the events.

Most of these embedded Psalms occur at significant junctures in Old Testament narratives and history:

The song of Moses and the Israelites (Exod 15:1-18,22) concludes the exodus from Egypt.

The song of Moses (Deut 32:1-43) is among the last utterances of the God-ordained leader and law-giver of Israel. Deborah's and Barak's praise (Judg 5:1-31) forms the climax and conclusion to the positive judges of Israel. Gideon in Judges 6-9 is a turning point. From then on negative aspects increase up to the disaster of chapters 17-21. With its messianic ending Hannah's psalm transcends the individual horizon of the narrative. Her prayer opens the narrative for God's dealings with his people. David's long prayer in 2 Samuel 22:1-51 occurs 'on the day when the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul'. 1 Chronicles 16:8-36 was performed by Asaph and his kindred on the day David first appointed the singing of praises to the Lord. Nehemiah's prayer of repentance and supplication (1:5-11; cf. also 9:5-38) is linked to the post-exilic restoration of Jerusalem. King Nebuchadnezzar, former oppressor and destroyer of Jerusalem now acknowledges Israel's God (4:34-37).

⁷³ *Psalms and Story*, p. 191f; italics CS. In view of Mary's *Magnificat* it is noteworthy that the song of Moses includes the women of Israel ('Moses and the Israelites', Exod 15:1). In Judges, Deborah and Barak sing (5:1). The Jewish heroine Judith begins her psalm on her own, then 'all the people loudly sang this song of praise' (15:14). Such praise is not limited to men or to levitical choirs!

Yet, at the same time the occurrence and position of these psalms in narratives also indicate the significance of the events and/or interpret them.⁷⁴ Such psalms serve as signals! Readers familiar with these narratives are likely to pay special attention when a psalm occurs in the Old Testament narratives – and in Luke's infancy narratives. What is unusual about Luke's hymns in comparison with those in the Old Testament is their position in the narrative. As in 1 Samuel 2:1-10, Luke's hymns occur concentrated at the *beginning* of the narrative, not at the end of the account (as *e. g.* in Deut, Judg or Jdt), and *only* at the beginning (see below).

These reflections on psalms embedded in Old Testament narratives and on their function in their context bring us to the function of Luke's psalms.

III. 3. Function

a) The people at prayer

When Mary, Zechariah and Simeon pray these psalms in Luke's narrative, they are put on parallel with those who prayed the psalms of the acknowledged and treasured Old Testament narratives. Luke's psalms reveal something about the people who pray them: they too are qualified by their prayers and the sources on which they draw. Wellmann noted that in his psalm 'Jonah speaks the language of Israel'.⁷⁵ Mary, Zechariah and Simeon likewise speak the language of pious Israel and of God's people. Luke portrays them as pious Israelites who praise God, understand the significance of the events in which they are a part and reflect this in their prayers that are steeped in Old Testament language and thought. Thus characterised, they testify to the coming of God's Christ and his significance for Israel and the nations.

God's salvation in his Messiah Jesus of Nazareth was not only recognised and cherished by people from the midst of pious Israel. God's universal salvation actually began with such exemplary people, they were part of the things that have come to fulfilment (participation in the events of the people at prayer is also a feature of the narratively inset Old Testament psalmody). Prompted by the Holy Spirit they immediately recognised the significance of the events, readily became part of them and wholeheartedly welcomed what God was doing in their midst for Israel and

⁷⁴ Watts, *Psalm and Story*, p. 11 notes: 'Many of these poems occupy thematically climactic and structurally crucial positions in larger blocks of narrative, or even whole books'.

⁷⁵ Wellmann, 'Gebet', p. 16.

the nations (for the significance of this for Luke's readers see below).⁷⁶ Says Farris:

Luke has placed these psalms in the mouths of those *Jews who are faithful to the law, the real Jews, the most Jewish Jews*,⁷⁷ the very sort of Jews who, according to Jervell, became believers. They announce in the most vigorous tones that God has done something definite for Israel: 'He has visited and redeemed his people' (Luke 1:68). ... it is more reasonable to suppose that these psalms stand *at the head of a book* which sees an Israel repentant and restored, at least partially, rather than an Israel rejecting the gospel and therefore rejected by its God.⁷⁸

It is because of people like Mary, Zechariah and Simeon (and the many other Jews who welcomed and accepted God's salvation in the Messiah Jesus!), that 'Luke could declare that God had not rejected all Israel but rather had redeemed a part of it'.⁷⁹ This theme is developed by the narrative and various quotations from the Old Testament in the remainder of the Gospel and in Acts.

The function of these psalms as characterisation of the main protagonists of the events is closely related to the highly commendable narrative portrayal of Mary, Zechariah and Simeon (Luke 1:5-7 – Zechariah; 1:27 – Mary⁸⁰; 2:25f – Simeon). In addition to these direct descriptions, all three are characterised by their *actions* (customary priestly service, entry of the sanctuary of the Lord after being chosen by lot to do so, devout submission in response to the demanding divine commission, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, being guided by the Spirit, coming into the temple, taking the child and praising God), their *words* (to the angel and to Mary and Joseph) and their *hymns*. In doing so Luke follows the conventions of Hebrew narrative, where the character of people is rarely described in detail; rather they are characterised by their words and actions.

Possibly Luke defends the mother of Jesus and the father of John the Baptist in this way against accusations. While some events in their lives

⁷⁶ For various techniques and issues in characterisation see J.A. Darr, *On Building Character: The Reader and the Rhetoric of Characterization in Luke-Acts*, Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992) and idem, *Herod the Fox: Audience Criticism and Lukan Characterization*, JSNTSup 163 (Sheffield: Sheffield AP, 1998).

⁷⁷ Italics CS.

⁷⁸ Farris, *Hymns*, p. 58f (italics CS); for the position of the Lukan hymns in Luke-Acts see below.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 159; for a summary of the evidence of the salvation of Israel in Luke-Acts see pp. 155-59.

⁸⁰ On the qualification of Mary, Lohfink, 'Lieder', p. 396 observes: 'Maria ... die längst vom Heiligen Geist überschattet ist (1:35) ... So ist das Magnificat, auch wenn die direkte Redeeinleitung dann einfach lautet, "und Maria sprach", *geisterfülltes, prophetisches Wort*'; italics CS.

were difficult to appreciate (which Luke raises and explains in his narrative) both of them were pious Jews beyond reproach.⁸¹

Here I again part way with Lohfink who writes on Luke's psalms: 'Also one can hardly say that the ... psalms serve to characterise the people who pray them although all of them are carefully composed to fit the different people who pray them'.⁸² For Lohfink the psalms serve for characterisation only 'in the sense, that all the people who pray these psalms are presented as salvation-historical, theological visionaries. Their hymns open dimensions of meaning which transcend what is narrated in their immediate context and venture beyond what the protagonists of the narrative experience.'⁸³

However, the awareness and expression of precisely this dimension impressively characterises the people who recognise this and pray accordingly. It agrees with the mention of the Holy Spirit and of prophecy in the narrative context.

b) Indication of the significance of the events

Psalms do not regularly occur in Old Testament narratives. Therefore, when they appear, they are special and indicate the significance of the events and provide theological commentary on what had happened, is happening or will happen.

Similar to the function of the Old Testament inset psalmody in narratives, Luke's psalms also indicate the nature and importance of the events which caused such prayers.⁸⁴ While, similar to the Old Testament psalms, Luke's psalms do not move the plot forward,⁸⁵ their exuberant praise underlines and interprets the significance of the events. Though the

⁸¹ We know of later Gentile (e. g. Celsus) and Jewish polemic against Mary's integrity; cf. J. Lieu, 'Celsus', in E. Kessler, N. Wenborn, eds., *A Dictionary of Jewish-Christian Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005), p. 81; G. Twelftree, 'Jesus in Jewish Traditions', in D. Wenham, ed., *Jesus Traditions Outside the Gospels* (Sheffield: Sheffield AP, 1982), pp. 290-325; R.E. van Voorst, 'Sources, Extra-New Testamental', in Evans, *Encyclopedia of the Historical Jesus*, (602-06), p. 604 and L. Hagemann, 'Maria VI. Judentum und Islam', *LTK* 6 (1997), p. 1326f.

⁸² 'Lieder' (translated from German), p. 395.

⁸³ 'In den vier Liedern drücken sich nicht menschliche Gefühle aus, sondern göttliche Wirklichkeiten. Wenn die Sänger und Sängerinnen der vier Lieder charakterisiert werden, dann nur als deren Vermittler. Im strengen Sinne charakterisiert wird dagegen der Hauptaktant der ganzen Erzählung: der heilsgeschichtlich handelnde Gott. Er wird in den Liedern besungen. Sein Geschichtshandeln kommt zur Sprache. Das entspricht abermals dem Befund in den alttestamentlichen Parallelen', 'Lieder' (translated from German), p. 396.

⁸⁴ Watts, *Psalms and Story*, p. 180 notes that the *Magnificat* and the *Benedictus* 'conclude the episodes to which they belong, thus resembling the position of many psalms in narrative contexts of the Hebrew Bible'.

⁸⁵ This has been noted by Lohfink, 'Lieder', p. 392 for the Old Testament and Luke 1f: 'Die Handlungsunterbrechung durch die Hymnen ... entspricht genau den alttestamentlichen Parallelen'. He further notes ('Lieder', p. 394): 'Ähnlich wie in den alttestamentlichen Parallelen dienen die ... Hymnen also nicht der lyrischen Duplizierung des im Kontext Erzählten'; but they add to it.

events came to pass without any or only limited public attention and were in many ways unusual, they indeed are the beginning of salvation for Jews and Gentiles alike in God's Messiah and saviour Jesus – though this Messiah differed from what many contemporaries anticipated.⁸⁶

The emphasis of the significance of the events through the inclusion of hymns is enhanced by their *position* in Luke's account. Watts' observations on the position of Hannah's psalm at the *beginning* of 1-2 Samuel (1 Sam 2:1-10) apply to Lukan psalms occurring at the *beginning* of Luke-Acts: '*The song near the beginning sets the mood and primes the readers/hearers not only for the following stories, but also for the more extensive celebration of Yahweh's faithfulness to David at the end*'.⁸⁷ Luke's psalms likewise set the mood and prime the readers/hearers for what is to come. And there is also an element of Yahweh's faithfulness to David up to the end of Luke-Acts.⁸⁸

Luke tells about the fulfilment of promises, the restoration of Israel and in its wake the inclusion of Gentiles into God's people. Yet it all started with Israel's most pious: they recognised what God was about to do in fulfilling his promises of old; they welcomed it gladly and praised God for it in the style and language of Israel's worship of old. This perspective of spiritual perception, joy and (traditional) praise is to guide readers through Luke-Acts (see below). The psalms of the infancy serve as the overture that sets the scene for the following narrative. This is how the author envisions the readers' response to the account.

A further observation on the position of the psalms in 1-2 Samuel is interesting. In 1 and 2 Samuel, psalms occur at the beginning and the end of the narrative: Hannah's prayer opens the account of Samuel (his mother's praise over this birth), David's psalm in 2 Samuel 22:1-51 closes the narrative.⁸⁹ 2 Samuel 22:51, almost the end of 1-2 Samuel, reflects Hannah's prayer in many ways, thus creating a link between both psalms at the beginning and the end of the narrative. They bracket the narrative.

⁸⁶ Cf. Hengel, *Jesus und das Judentum*, pp. 461-548; Chester, *Messiah and Exaltation* and G.S. Oegema, 'Messianism and Messianic Figures in Second Temple Judaism', in Evans, *Encyclopedia of the Historical Jesus*, pp. 406-09.

⁸⁷ Watts, *Psalms and Story*, p. 189; italics CS. Similarly Farris, *Hymns*, p. 151: 'The three Jewish Christian hymns of Luke 1-2 occupy a special place in Luke-Acts: they stand at the head of the two volumes. It appears that Luke himself may well have inserted them into their present prominent positions ...'. Farris considers various explanations why the hymns stand at the very head of Luke's account.

⁸⁸ Cf. Acts 28:17-24. Right to the end of Acts Paul proclaims the *kingdom of God* in Rome, a notion that cannot be separated from David and the Son of David; cf. T.R. Hatina, 'David' in Evans, *Encyclopedia of the Historical Jesus*, p. 130f; C.A. Evans, 'Son of David', in Evans, *Encyclopedia of the Historical Jesus*, pp. 583-86 and Miura, *David in Luke-Acts*.

⁸⁹ Cf. Lohfink, 'Lieder', p. 390: 'Sie sind nämlich auf intensivste Weise durch gemeinsame Motive und durch gemeinsame Lexeme miteinander verkettet. Das Lied der Hanna könnte geradezu als Kurzfassung von 2 Samuel 22 dienen'; for a detailed analysis see Klement, *II Samuel*, 110-17.

Mary's *Magnificat* resembles Hannah's prayer in many ways. In addition, there are several thematic parallels between Mary's prayer in Luke 1:46-55, Luke's infancy narratives (Luke 1f) and the whole of Luke-Acts and the books of Samuel: both narratives tell of the birth of special children, of pious mothers and their praises, of the eventual establishment of Davidic kingship by David (as king over Israel) and the 'Son of David' as king of a universal kingdom, the kingdom motive, division within Israel, the relationship of Israel and the nations, *etc.*

Watts observes that 'most of the psalms in narrative contexts are placed *at or near the end of narrative blocks*, ranging in size from single scenes or episodes (Judg 5; 1 Chr 16; Luke 1f) to whole books (Deut 32f; 2 Sam 22f; Jdt 16, Tob 13). In the latter, they usually share the concluding role with other poetic and prose materials with which the psalms work to bring the narrative to a climactic finale.'⁹⁰ It is noteworthy that Luke-Acts, by contrast, has three psalms concentrated at the *beginning* of the narrative and *none* later on. There is no 'concluding role with other poetic and prose materials ... which bring the narrative to a climactic finale' (Watts). Luke-Acts does *not* close with a final psalm – for example by Paul, for example after surviving the shipwreck of Acts 27 on the way westward, on his arrival in Rome in Acts 28:14f ('On seeing them, Paul thanked God and took courage', 28:15 – here a Pauline psalm would have fitted perfectly!) or following Acts 28:28 – that picks up from the psalms of the infancy narratives. How can this be explained? Apart from the thorny question of the sources at Luke's disposal and his own creativity in writing,⁹¹ one reason might be that while the story and mission of Hannah's son Samuel to firmly establish Davidic kingship over Israel is accomplished at the end of 2 Samuel, the mission of Mary's son Jesus and of his followers is not accomplished yet. Far more than the kingship of the Son of David over Israel is in mind. In contrast to 1 and 2 Samuel, Luke-Acts has an open end, inviting the readers to join in.⁹²

In a *canonical* perspective, the praise and prayers of Revelation (see above) may be the texts that function to complement Mary's *Magnificat* in a similar way as the psalm of David in 2 Samuel 22:1-51 complements Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 2:1-10.⁹³

⁹⁰ *Psalms and Story*, p. 186; italics CS.

⁹¹ For the sources cf. C.K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles II: Introduction and Commentary on Acts XV-XXVIII*, ICC (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998), xxiv-xxxii and Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, pp. 61-72.

⁹² For the end of Acts cf. Barrett, *Acts II*, pp. 1234-53; Jervell, *Apostelgeschichte*, pp. 622-31 and R. Pesch, *Die Apostelgeschichte (Apg 13-28)*, EKKNT V.2 (Zürich, Einsiedeln, Cologne: Benziger; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1986), pp. 305-13.

⁹³ One could also ask whether, Paul's apology before the people of Jerusalem, Festus and/or Herod Agrippa in the last quarter of Acts have a similar function to David's prayer at the end of 2 Samuel.

c) Theological commentary on the events

As in the Old Testament narratives, Luke's psalms function as 'theological commentaries' on the events, as noted by Watts: 'The widespread use of psalms and other poems ... provide(s) explicit thematic commentary within prose narratives ...'.⁹⁴ People with the right credentials (indicated by descriptions, their actions, words and prayers, see above) tell the readers in their praises of the meaning of the events.⁹⁵ They exuberantly praise *God* and thus make it clear that *He* is the one who acts in all this. The *theocentric* character of the embedded psalms emphasises this (in this regard I follow Lohfink on characterisation, see the discussion above).

In addition to pointing to the God who acts in all this, Luke's psalms also describe the *nature of the salvation* which Luke sets out to tell. Lohfink describes the way in which the embedded psalms describe the nature of *God's salvation for Israel*. By using this very Old Testament, the very Jewish literary technique (inset psalmody in narrative) and by drawing on the psalms of Israel (both from the Psalter and inset psalmody), Luke's psalms indicate that this is primarily *Israel's restoration* and its salvation and that '*this salvation is rooted in Israel's past*. It fulfils God's word.'⁹⁶ Farris speaks of:

the [Lukan] psalms' characteristic use of the Old Testament to explain the present salvation in terms of God's past dealing with his people. By loose allusions to the relevant portions of the Old Testament it becomes clear that the present fulfilment is like the *Exodus* (1:50,51,71) or *the raising up of David* (1:69), or *the conquest for Canaan* (1:75). ... the present salvation is a fulfilment of God's promises.⁹⁷

The theme of Luke's hymns is God's 'decisive help for and restoration of *Israel*'.⁹⁸ This becomes clear in the emphasis on promise and fulfilment as characteristic of salvation history: 'This is shown by their position in the narrative: each culminates a promise-fulfilment-praise progression. It is also a recurring motif within the hymns, finding explicit

⁹⁴ *Psalms and Story*, p. 193.

⁹⁵ In Luke's narrative this comes across even stronger as Mary is said to bear the Holy Spirit and to be overshadowed by God (1:35), Zechariah is filled with the Holy Spirit and utters prophecies (1:67) and the Spirit rests on Simeon (2:25 and two other occurrences of the Spirit).

⁹⁶ Farris, *Hymns*, p. 150.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 153; italics CS. 'The position of the hymns of Luke 1f at the head of the two volumes is but another striking example of the author's use of the motif of promise and fulfilment. By placing the hymns of Luke 1f in their present position, Luke announces to the reader that this theme of promise and fulfilment will be a vital one in the work as a whole.' The hymns are to guide the reader in how to understand the following narrative. How the events are to be seen is already declared at the beginning of the prologue (Luke 1:1): they are 'things that have come to fulfilment' (πεπληροφημένων ... πραγμάτων).

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.152; italics CS.

expression in each of the three psalms'.⁹⁹ Drawing on the studies of Jacob Jervell, Farris summarises the restoration of Israel motif in Luke-Acts.¹⁰⁰ He concludes that Luke has inserted the three psalms 'into their present position at the head of his work in order to anticipate the motif of the restoration of Israel accomplished by the apostolic preaching of the gospel'.¹⁰¹

At the same time the last of the three psalms, the *Nunc dimittis*, at its very end indicates that this salvation will move beyond Israel. The Gentiles too, are to have a share in this great salvation. This happens in fulfilment of Scripture as Luke argues at key junctions of his work and for the glory of God's people Israel.

d) The stylistic and linguistic nature of Luke's account: events in continuity

In addition to characterising the people at prayer by their hymns, the whole account of the events displays a distinct character by their inclusion: 'The effect of all the psalms is to make the Lukan infancy narratives sound more like the Septuagint (i.e. Scripture). The prose of these chapters is also heavily influenced by the Hebraicised Greek of the Septuagint.'¹⁰² W. L. Knox rightly called the first two chapters of Luke's Gospel 'an orgy in Hebraic Greek'.¹⁰³

Watts surveys the development of using psalms and other poetry in narrative contexts in post biblical Jewish and early Christian literature and concludes: 'The tendency of later books of the Hebrew Bible to punctuate the narrative periodically with prose prayers ... or hymnic poems ... which point out the work's central themes is carried on in the poetic additions to Daniel 3, the book of Tobit and the Revelation of John. Luke 1-2 also makes use of this tradition ...' By including such psalms early on and by his imitation of the Septuagint, Luke emphasises the *continuity* of the events which he narrates with the Old Testament narrative (in addition to our above observation on their position).¹⁰⁴ It is a new chapter of a story that began long ago (cf. John 1:1-18).

⁹⁹ Ibid., *Hymns*, p. 152.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., *Hymns*, p. 154-59.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., *Hymns*, p. 158.

¹⁰² Watts, *Psalms and Story*, p. 180. For the language of the infancy narratives see Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, p. 312 and Farris, *Hymns*, pp. 31-50. According to Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 17, Luke 1:5-2:52 'is separated from the dedicatory preface (1:1-4) by a shift from literary Greek to heavily Semitic Greek and from studied secularity to a tone of intense Jewish piety', cf. Nolland's survey of Luke 1f on pp. 18-25.

¹⁰³ W.L. Knox, *The Sources of the Synoptic Sources II* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1957), p. 40 quoted according to Farris, *Hymns*, p. 31. Farris discusses in detail the original languages of the Lukan hymns (pp. 31-50).

¹⁰⁴ Did Luke not include hymns later on in his account in order to indicate that in all continuity with the past something new that moves beyond the old narrative(s) has come about? Private prayer gives way to

e) The Lukan psalms and the reaction of the readers

As in the Old Testament narratives, these pious Israelites recognised what God was about to do or what he was already doing in their midst and saw the far-reaching implications of it.¹⁰⁵ What is the significance of these hymns for Luke's audience? Watts concludes '*... that hymnic poetry in this position invites the readers to join the celebration*, an effect which is especially strong in the victory songs of Exodus 15, Judges 5, and Judith 16'.¹⁰⁶ He argues that the effects of the embedded psalms *on ancient Hebrew readers* will have been different compared to modern readers,

not only because of their familiarity with the words and music, but also because reading in the ancient world usually involved *performance*. Reading almost always meant *reading aloud*, and was often directed to an audience who 'heard' the text. This would have been all the more true of literature that was *read liturgically*. ... The psalms' involvement of the readers has rightly been considered an example of *literary actualization*. As songs, the psalms in narrative contexts must have had an especially strong impact on ancient Jewish readers and hearers.¹⁰⁷

These insights, taken together with our observations on characterisation (the psalms as paradigms for the readers), suggest that Luke's psalms had or were meant to have similar effects on Luke's audience.

Do these hymns represent the reaction Luke wants *Jews* and *Jewish Christians* to identify with in view of God's salvation of Israel and the Gentiles? Are they invited to join in this praise? Rather than following the opponents of Paul's disputed Gentile mission – which strove to bring God's salvation to the ends of the earth and for which Luke writes his two volume apology –, the readers are to join Mary, Zechariah and Simeon – *Jews* exemplary in their spiritual perception, piety and prayer – in their praise of God's visitation of his people Israel and his illumination of the Gentiles.¹⁰⁸ They serve as the role models.

That Israel has good reasons to join in this praise becomes clear from Luke-Acts as a whole and from Simeon's *Nunc dimittis*. At the end of Luke's interlinked psalms is Simeon's praise of God's salvation as 'a light

the community's praise (Acts 2:47; 4:23-30; 11:18) and the public proclamation of the Messiah through his apostles.

¹⁰⁵ Though the events were disputable or seemingly insignificant from a human perspective: all there was, were two children born under unusual circumstances.

¹⁰⁶ Watts, *Psalms and Story*, p. 187; italics CS.

¹⁰⁷ *Psalms and Story*, p. 188; italics CS; cf. W.J. Porter, 'Liturgical Interpretation', in Porter, *Dictionary of Biblical Criticism*, pp. 206-10.

¹⁰⁸ Mary accepts her calling to bear this divinely begotten child and to give birth to it. For this calling she magnifies God, her saviour. Does Mary's exemplary reaction and praise call Israel to also accept children not 'begotten and born' the normal way (i. e. as proselytes), namely the *Gentile Christians*?

for revelation to the Gentiles' (2:32). This vision is echoed by Acts 13:47: 'I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles, so that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth', Paul's first programmatic statement on his Gentile mission and by Acts 26:18, the charge of the exalted Christ to Paul, the missionary to the nations.¹⁰⁹ However, the very end and climax of Luke's psalms is Simeon's assurance that God's salvation will lead to 'glory for God's people *Israel*' (2:32) after the benefits for the nations are spelt out. This is the last line of the last psalm! This arrangement emphasises that despite God's revelatory light to the Gentiles (here announced and later accomplished through the Gentile mission), Israel will not be neglected or by-passed by God but will be *glorified* in and through the illumination of the Gentiles. It is clear from the account of Luke-Acts that to the end Israel is in view. Her glory consists of her being gathered and restored in the ministry of the Messiah among Israel¹¹⁰ and the events in Jerusalem in the early chapters of Acts (cf. Acts 15:16: 'After this I will return and I will rebuild the dwelling of David, which has fallen; from its ruins I will rebuild it, and I will set it up ...').¹¹¹ From Israel thus restored, the light is taken to the Gentiles. At the same time, the message continues to be proclaimed to Jews. Paul welcomed '*all who came to him*, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance' (Acts 28:30f). To the end the message is God's compassion and salvation for his people.

Simeon's vision of revelatory light to the Gentiles and glory for Israel points to the whole narrative of Luke-Acts, although – at first sight in reverse, yet chronological order (first the restoration of Israel and then the Gentile mission). Simeon's order (Gentiles – Israel) serves to *assure* Israel: the light for revelation to the Gentiles will not lower Israel's status and glory. On the contrary, it will be enhanced! Therefore *Jews and Jewish Christians*, rather than opposing the mission striving to illuminate these Gentiles, *should loudly sing God's praises for what he is doing in their midst and far beyond*.

In addition to this glorification of Israel *by God* in its own salvation, gathering and restoration, Israel also receives glory/recognition from the Gentiles. The Gentiles come to believe in Israel's God, they hear his word and of the salvation he accomplished first and foremost for his people

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Stenschke, *Luke's Portrait*, pp. 245-55.

¹¹⁰ For the 'restoration of Israel' - motif cf. M. F. Bird, *Jesus and the Origins of the Gentile Mission*, Library of Historical Jesus Studies: Library of New Testament Studies 331 (London: T. & T. Clark, 2006), pp. 26-45 and M.E. Fuller, *The Restoration of Israel: Israel's Re-gathering and the Fate of the Nations in Early Jewish Literature and Luke-Acts*, BZWN 138 (Berlin, New York: W. de Gruyter, 2006).

¹¹¹ Cf. Jervell, *Theology of Acts*, 18-54 and *Apostelgeschichte*, pp. 90-105 (Jervell's arguments are summarised by Farris, *Hymns*, 155-59); cf. also my 'Neue Monographien zum lukanischen Doppelwerk: Ein Forschungsbericht', *JET* 22, 2008, pp. 69-105.

Israel. In addition, they contribute to its needs.¹¹² The Gentile Christians honour Israel's traditions by submitting to the decree of the Jerusalem Council and thus respect the identity and heritage of Israel (Acts 15:20f,28f).¹¹³ The often noted emphasis on alms-giving and financial responsibility in Luke's Gospel,¹¹⁴ the references to the early Christian sharing of goods in Jerusalem and the account of the Antiochene famine relief for Jerusalem¹¹⁵ may be Luke's way of justifying or of supporting Paul's collection for the saints in Jerusalem, which he does not mention directly. The *Jewish Christians'* acceptance of the divinely enlightened Gentiles may be a parallel to what Luke may want his *Gentile* readers to do in order to build and strengthen the unity of the church. It is a sad fact that the multifaceted history of Jewish-Christian relations has not been one of

¹¹² Acts 11:27-31. This theme is developed by Paul in Romans 15:25-28, where the collection for the saints in Jerusalem is understood to be an acknowledgement of the salvation historical priority of Israel by the Gentile Christians and expression of their indebtedness to Jerusalem; cf. S. McKnight, 'Collection for the Saints', *DPL*, pp. 143-47 and the recent longer treatment by D.J. Downs, *The Offering of the Gentiles: Paul's Collection for Jerusalem and Its Chronological, Cultural and Cultic Contexts*, WUNT II.248 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

¹¹³ Cf. Stenschke, *Luke's Portrait*, pp. 74-77; B. Witherington, 'Not so Idle Thoughts about *Eidolothuton*', *TynBul* 44, 1993, pp. 237-54 and R. Deines, 'Das Aposteldekret: Halacha für Heidenchristen oder christliche Rücksichtnahme auf jüdische Tabus?', in J. Frey, D.R. Schwartz *et al*, eds., *Jewish Identity in the Greco-Roman World: Jüdische Identität in der griechisch-römischen Welt*, Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity 71 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 323-95. According to Deines the decree describes four areas, 'in denen den Heidenchristen ein Verhalten angemahnt wird, das jüdischem Empfinden in Hinblick auf elementare Vollzüge menschlicher Existenz Rechnung trägt ... Die jüdischen Texte lassen erkennen, dass auch von Heiden ein Verhalten erwartet wird, welches diese Grenzen respektiert. Wo dies nicht der Fall ist, ist keine Gemeinschaft in irgendeiner Form möglich, sondern nur Abwehr und Distanz. Mit anderen Worten: diese Bestimmungen definieren Grenzen, die um der Wahrung der eigenen Identität willen und im Hinblick auf die Gott gegenüber geforderte Loyalität als sein Volk zu leben nicht überschritten werden dürfen. Umgekehrt gilt dann auch: wo diese Grenzen eingehalten werden, ist ein Miteinander möglich' (p. 393f).

Would Simeon have been surprised had he seen how Israel and the Gentiles are related to each other in Acts? For Luke, God made it clear that the Gentiles *as Gentiles* can participate in God's salvation of his people. The people of God that emerges in Luke-Acts is one consisting of Jews and Gentiles in continuity with Israel of old. The Gentiles need not become Jews in order to join – the Jews remain Jews and can expect of the Gentile Christians to live together with them as the strangers in the midst of the Israel of old had done and to respect Israel (cf. Acts 15:20,29; 21:25). Though there is but one church, Simeon's dichotomy of humanity in Israel and the nations remains.

¹¹⁴ Cf. B.E. Beck, *Christian Character in the Gospel of Luke* (London: Epworth, 1989), pp. 28-54; V. Petracca, *Gott oder das Geld: Die Besitzethik des Lukas*, Texte und Arbeiten zum neutestamentlichen Zeitalter 39 (Tübingen, Basel: Francke, 2003) and H. Stettberger, *Nichts haben - alles geben?: Eine kognitiv-linguistisch orientierte Studie zur Besitzethik im lukanischen Doppelwerk*, Herders Biblische Studien 45 (Freiburg, Basel, Wien: Herder, 2005).

¹¹⁵ Cf. B. Capper, 'The Palestinian Cultural Context of Earliest Christian Community of Goods', in R. Bauckham, ed., *The Book of Acts in Its Palestinian Setting*, The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting IV (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995), pp. 323-56; Barrett, *Acts I*, pp. 558-66; B.W. Winter, 'Acts and Food Shortages', in D.W.J. Gill, C. Gempf, eds., *The Book of Acts in Its Graeco-Roman Setting*, The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting II (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1994), pp. 59-78.

Christian respect, recognition and enhancement of Israel's glory (see below).¹¹⁶

Gentile Christian readers are called to join in these psalms and praise God for the gathering, restoration and glorification of Israel as well as for the illumination of the nations, which happens according to the will and plan of God and from which Gentiles benefit. It is praise for God's faithfulness which also guarantees the Gentiles' eschatological salvation (cf. Romans 8:31-11:36). That the Gentiles are called to praise God in the words of a young Jewish Galilean woman in the Judean hill country, of an aged priest of the temple of Jerusalem and of an old man of Jerusalem waiting for the consolation of Israel in the courts of the temple of Jerusalem, reminds Gentile Christians of the first addresses of this salvation and of the nature of the salvation in which they had the privilege to be included.

IV. Conclusion

We have surveyed the psalms of the Lukan infancy narrative, their content, their indebtedness to the Psalms as well as their firm place in Luke-Acts and their significance. We have taken clues from the psalms embedded in Old Testament narratives and have seen that – viewed against this background – the psalms in Luke's account have an important function. They are far from being merely ornamental.

Some psalms of the Psalter call on Israel to sing a new song (33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9, 149:1; cf. also Isa 42:10, Rev 5:9). This is what these devout Jews at prayer in Luke's infancy narratives did. In view of what was announced to them and came to fulfilment among them, Mary, Zechariah and Simeon praised God with new songs, which, however, in style and content drew on the 'old songs' of the Psalter and of biblical narrative. They drew on the praises of Israel to express their joy and gratitude over God's fulfilment of his promises (Luke 1f). Luke tells his readers that both, the light of revelation for the Gentiles and the glorification of Israel, has happened and is happening. It should be welcomed with gladness and exuberant praise by Jews and all the more so by all other peoples who benefit from God's salvation ... to this very day. Like the first readers, today's readers of these narratives and prayers are called to join Mary, Zechariah and Simeon in singing God's praise in new songs. They are to express their praise of God's present action in Jesus Christ by drawing on the worship of Israel as the one God is acting and

¹¹⁶ Cf. Kessler, Wenborn, *Dictionary of Jewish-Christian Relations* and M.H. Jung, *Christen und Juden: Die Geschichte ihrer Beziehungen* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2008).

being praised in both covenants. While one need not be or become a devout friend of the different metrical versions of the Psalms and of recent worship choruses that are based on the Psalms, Christians need to reflect theologically what happens when they draw on the psalms of Israel,¹¹⁷ other Old Testament traditions and words of the New Testament in their worship and – even more so – what happens if they do not do so! – which might be far more telling than they are aware of.

Despite the personalised sections of the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-49), the *Benedictus* (1:76?) and the *Nunc Dimittis* (2:29f), Luke's psalms have had a rich influence on Christian liturgy and worship.¹¹⁸ For a number of reasons,¹¹⁹ much of this influence has not been continued in Baptistic traditions. With due reverence to the unique salvation-historical situation of Mary, Zechariah and Simeon and their particular callings, in these ecclesial traditions Luke's psalms by and large wait to be rediscovered.¹²⁰ Their fabulous combination of gratitude and praise for personal blessing, their awareness of the people of God and their belonging to this community, their salvation-historical perspective as well as universal orientation could challenge the many highly individualistic prayers in the pietistic traditions. Is it time to rediscover and use the rich tapestries of Biblical traditions in personal and communal prayer?

However, Luke's psalms not only call on Christians to join pious *Israel* in praise, they also call them to remember *where* and with *whom* it all began, who were the first addressees, when the God of Israel initiated a movement from the midst of pious Israel on whose shoulders we stand and whose root supports us to this day (Rom 11:18) and to the ends of the earth

¹¹⁷ In his two-volume *Werkbuch Psalmen* (I. *Die Psalmen 1-72*; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2001; II. *Die Psalmen 73-150*, 2003), B. Weber notes for each Psalm how it has been used in various German language hymnaries: 'Den Schluss machen Hinweise, wo sich der Psalm in den wichtigen deutschsprachigen Gesangbüchern der Evangelischen und Katholischen Kirche(n) – sei es als Lesetexte oder vertont mit Melodieangaben – findet (I,20)'.

¹¹⁸ For brief surveys see M. Eham, 'Magnificat II. Liturgisch', *RGG* 5 (2002), p. 680f; A.W. Ruff, 'Nunc Dimittis', *RGG* 6 (2003), p. 434f and J. Halmo, 'Cantica', *RGG* 2 (1999), p. 56f. The *Benedictus* of the Catholic liturgical tradition (the second part of the *Sanctus*, following after the first *Hosanna*) is not based on Luke 1:68-79 but on Matthew 21:9; cf. D.E. Saliers, 'Benedictus', *RGG* 1 (1998), p. 1290; the Anglican *Benedictus* is Luke 1:68-79 (cf. 'The Canticles' of the *Book of Common Prayer*). All of this Lukan influence on later liturgical tradition is surpassed by the *Ave Maria* prayer which begins with the announcement of the birth of Jesus and the benediction of Elisabeth Luke 1:28 and 42; cf. W. Flynn, 'Ave Maria', *RGG* 1 (1998), p. 1021.

¹¹⁹ Among such reasons might be the blend of individual elements, thanksgiving and praise and the universal perspective of Luke's psalms and the awareness of their unique setting in salvation history. However, this blend or awareness did not keep other traditions from drawing on them. Much of this neglect of Luke's hymns is caused by the non-conformist heritage of most Baptistic traditions.

¹²⁰ Two random examples suffice: The *Scriptural Index of Scripture Readings* of the 1975 *Baptist Hymnal* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1975), p. 542f includes Luke 2:1,4-14 but none of Luke's psalms. The German *Feiern & Loben: Die Gemeindelieder* (Holzgerlingen: Hänssler; Witten: Bundesverlag; Kassel: Oncken, 2003) includes Luke 1:46-55 and 1:68-79 as the only responsive readings from the Gospels other than Matthew 5:3-10.

– from the temple in Jerusalem, the Judean hill country and Nazareth in Galilee via Galilee, Antioch, Asia Minor, Greece and Rome – to follow but Luke's North Western trajectory.

The city of Prague where this paper was read first and the present journal is edited, with its once vibrant Jewish life and its synagogues now mostly silent, where the voices of many tourists can be heard rather than the prayers and psalms of Israel, and from where those who recited and cherished them were deported to Terezin and Auschwitz to be murdered,¹²¹ is an apt reminder of the dangers involved in forgetting *whose* hymns and whose praises Christians should sing: the hymns of God's people and to the praise of her God and our God.

However, not only the synagogues of this and most other European cities have become silent. In many of Europe's churches tourists are heard rather than worship and all kinds of programmes presented, often not or only vaguely related to Christianity – if churches these buildings still are. There are a variety of reasons for this development which obviously defy easy analysis and answers. One of the reasons surely is that those who preached and gathered there often sung the praises of this, that and everything – of progress, of race, of humanity and humanism, of peace, of disarmament, of gender, of self advancement, of health and of ever present idol mammon, to name but a few – rather than of the living God.

Christians should remember that the Mary, of whom many statues have been erected in Prague in the wake of the Counter Reformation of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,¹²² is hardly Luke's Mary, but the Mary of later dogma and central European popular piety.¹²³ *Luke's Mary* was a young *Jewish* peasant woman, with whose calling, obedience and *praise* it all began.¹²⁴ Inspired by the Psalms, she praised God for his mercy toward *Israel* and his faithfulness. It is a welcome development that many churches, including the Roman church and churches in the baptistic

¹²¹ Cf. V. Leininger, 'Prag III. Judentum in Prag/Böhmen und Mähren', *RGG* 6 (2003), p. 1545f.

¹²² Cf. T. Kaufmann, 'Gegenreformation III. Merkmale', *RGG* 3 (2000), p. 543f and H. Petri, 'Marienverehrung I. Katholisch', *RGG* 5 (2002), pp. 820-22.

¹²³ Cf. the surveys of W. Beinert ('Katholisch'), K.- C. Felmy ('Orthodox'), A. Birmelé ('Evangelisch') and W. Beinert (Gegenwärtige Diskussion) in 'Mariologie II. Systematisch', *RGG* 5 (2002), pp. 826-30 and R. Frieling ('Evangelisch'), F. Courth ('Katholisch' and 'Orthodoxie') in 'Maria III. Dogmatisch', *TRE* 22 (1992), pp. 137-51.

¹²⁴ The Jewishness of Mary has been appreciated by modern Jewish study of Mary L. Hagemann, 'Maria VI. Judentum und Islam', *LTK* 6 (1997), p. 1326 writes: 'In der [jüdischen] Gegenwartsliteratur wird Maria vor allem als jüdische Mutter gesehen, die das Judesein Jesu prägte und ihn in jüdischem Umfeld und in jüdischen Traditionen aufzog. Theologische Aussagen fehlen'; cf. also S. Ben-Chorin, *Mutter Mirjam: Maria in jüdischer Sicht*, 4th ed. (München: dtv, 1986).

tradition,¹²⁵ have reflected afresh on their relationship to Israel in the past and in the present in the wake of the Holocaust.

There is a noteworthy monument in Prague which commemorates how once a Jewish inhabitant of Prague – as a punishment for an alleged mockery of the *Crucifixus* – was condemned by Christian authorities to pay for the *Sanctus* ('Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Zebaoth')¹²⁶ to be added in gilded *Hebrew* letters to an existing statue of the crucified Christ on Charles Bridge.¹²⁷ This impressive and deplorable depiction reminds Christians of their Jewish origins as well as of the priority and redemption of Israel. It was indeed the Holy One of Israel who made this salvation come to pass – and none other. As the holy one *of Israel* he is to be praised for it. The mere use of the *Sanctus* in some liturgical traditions, is not sufficient in itself, but points in the right direction.

The Psalms as they are received, prayed and further developed in Luke's infancy narrative, in view of how God had mercy and began to act for the salvation of Israel and the nations, constitute the hymnal and theological backdrop for Luke's account and for the church's worship. In his *Gnomon Novi Testamenti* of 1742, Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752) commented on the last verse of Acts: 'With this the church had received its proper form, which she would retain and preserve as a valuable addition'. In view of our examination we may add: Not just its appropriate *form*, but – with the psalms of Mary, Zechariah and Simeon – also its *hymns*.

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¹²⁵ Cf. the declaration of the Second Vatican Council's *Declaratio de ecclesiae habitudine ad religiones non-Christians* (*Nostra aetate*) § 4 October 1965; cf. *LThK* 13 (1967), pp. 405-95; J.C. Merkle, 'Vatican II', in Kessler, Wenborn, *Dictionary of Jewish-Christian Relations*, p. 439 (cf. also the earlier statements on Jews in *Lumen gentium*; A. Doetzel, 'Roman Catholicism', in Kessler, Wenborn, *Dictionary of Jewish-Christian Relations*, pp. 380-83; for a baptistic example cf. 'Zum Verhältnis von Juden und Christen - Eine Handreichung für die Gemeinden des BEFG', Bund Evangelisch-Freikirchlicher Gemeinden in Deutschland (Hamburg, 1997; English as 'The Relationship between Jews and Christians - A Document for the Member Churches of the BEFG', Baptist Union of Germany); cf. the surveys of Jung, *Christen und Juden*, 243-50 ('Katholizismus und Judentum im Umfeld des 2. Vatikanums'), pp. 250-62 for the post-1945 Protestant discussion.

¹²⁶ Cf. A.W. Ruff, S'ancus I. Liturgisch', *RGG* 7 (2004), p. 826.

¹²⁷ The statue is located toward the middle of the series of statues on the right of the bridge as one faces the castle; for photographs see <http://members.virtualtourist.com/m/p/m/148939/>; <http://members.virtualtourist.com/m/p/m/2b641f/>, both accessed on 26 December 2008, 22:45.

6

**God's Mercy from Generation to Generation:
Luke's use of Psalms 105-108 in his Infancy Narrative
Songs to Provide a Salvation Historical Understanding
for his two-volume History**

Rollin G. Grams

Introduction

The following paper expands Christoph Stenschke's 'Psalms and the Psalms in Luke's Infancy Narrative'. Stenschke focused attention on Luke's infancy narrative songs, Mary's *Magnificat* (Lk. 1.46-55), Zechariah's *Benedictus* (Lk. 1.68-79), and Simeon's *Nunc Dimittis* (Lk. 2.29-32), noting similarities to songs and prayers in the Old Testament. With his focus more on the Lukan passages themselves, he was able to trace their relationship to the remainder of Luke and Acts. He was thereby able to demonstrate that Luke sees the Gentiles included in, not 'superseding', Israel in God's plan.

This very helpful study by Stenschke leaves room for a closer examination of Luke's use of the Old Testament in these infancy narrative songs. Commentators agree that the prayers or songs of Mary, Zechariah, and Simeon are steeped in Septuagint phraseology. This valid comment leads to the practice of listing a number of Old Testament passages, not a single passage, as intertextual echoes heard in Luke's songs. Of course, Luke's use of Hannah's prayer from 1 Samuel is clear in Mary's song. What is missing in these observations is greater attention to Luke's careful use of particular passages from the Psalms.

Thus this paper will explore Luke's use of Psalms 105, 106, 107, and 108 in the songs of his infancy narratives. His use of this sequence of psalms points towards a theological interpretation, not just rhetorical use, of the Old Testament. We will see that Luke's theological interpretation of these psalms is foundational for his two volume work as it lays the groundwork for his mission theology, a salvation history of God's mercy from generation to generation (Lk. 1.50).

The Current State of Commentary

According to Gleason Archer and Gregory Chirichigno, Psalms 105-108 are not quoted in the New Testament.¹ The Nestle-Aland critical edition of the Greek NT² finds one paraphrase from Psalms 105-107 (no quote, paraphrase, allusion, or echo to Ps. 108 is found) in the New Testament: Romans 10.6-7's use of Ps. 107.26. Otherwise, Nestle-Aland finds possible allusions or echoes to these psalms in twenty-seven other passages in the New Testament (not counting Gospel parallels more than once). Among these twenty-seven, there are six allusions in Luke's infancy songs (Ps. 105.8f in Lk. 1.72; Ps. 106.10 in Lk. 1.71; Ps. 106.45 in Lk. 1.72; Ps. 106.48 in Lk. 1.68; Ps. 107.9 in Lk. 1.53; Ps. 107.10, 14 in Lk. 1.79) and six other uses of these psalms in Luke and Acts (Ps. 105.21 in Acts 7.10; Ps. 105.24 in Acts 7.17; Ps. 105.27 in Acts 7.36; Ps. 107.3 in Lk. 13.29; Ps. 107.20 in Acts 10.36 and 13.26). This information from Nestle-Aland does bring to attention Luke's interest, especially in his infancy narrative songs, in Psalms 105-107.

But commentators do not note or reflect on this point. A typical comment among commentators runs like this:

Blessed be the Lord God [in Lk. 1.68, Zechariah's Song] is a typical way of introducing a thanksgiving (cf. Pss. 41.13; 72.18; 106.48).³

This commentator represents what so many others do: several parallels are listed as examples of the rhetorical similarity in Luke, but no comment is made on the intentional use of any one particular passage. A number of commentators correctly list passages that offer interesting parallels, but they fail to see that Psalms 105, 106, 107 and 108 appear several times in their lists or that Hannah's song at the beginning of 1 Samuel is balanced by David's song near the end of 2 Samuel.

Even when a commentator finds a clear allusion to a psalm in Luke's songs, the significance of Luke's use of that text goes unexamined. Consider the discussion by David Pao and Eckhard Schnabel.⁴ With regard to Lk. 1.53, Pao and Schnabel state that 'precise allusions cannot be identified', although they observe that there are several linguistic and thematic parallels in 1 Sam. 2.5; Ps. 107.9; 146.7; Job 15.29; Jer. 7.11.⁵

¹ Gleason L. Archer and Gregory Chirichigno, *Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament* (The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, 1983).

² *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27th edition (Stuttgart: Biblia-Druck GmbH).

³ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Luke: An Introduction and Commentary* (Leicester, UK: InterVarsity Press / Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), p. 88.

⁴ David Pao and Eckhard Schnabel, 'Luke', in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, eds. G. Beale and D. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007).

⁵ Pao and Schnabel, 'Luke,' p. 262. In this they reference Darrell Bock (*Luke 1:1-9:50, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994), p. 157), although Bock notes

They do, however, note the importance of Hannah's song to Luke in chapters 1 and 2:

The Lukan use of the story of Hannah is found in the introduction to the Lukan birth narrative (1.15; cf. 1 Sam. 1.11), allusions to the song of Hannah (2 Sam. 2.1-10) in the Magnificat (1.46-55), the presentation of Jesus in the temple (2.21-24; cf. 1 Sam. 1.24-28), and the summary statements in 1.80; 2.40, 52 (cf. 1 Sam. 2.21, 26).⁶

Zechariah's song is commented on in a similar way. Parallels of interest are noted, e.g., for Lk. 1.71, see Ps. 18.17; 106.10. Lk. 1.72 also has several Old Testament parallels, but Pao and Schnabel identify the key passage for the first part of this verse as Micah 7, with its mention of mercy, victory over God's enemies, and Abraham. They correctly point the reader to Ps. 105.8-9 and 106.45 in v. 72's mention of the 'holy covenant', although they find the primary reference for this in Ex. 2.24.⁷ Along with six other references, Pao and Schnabel note Ps. 105.9-11 for Lk. 1.73, and along with one other reference they note Ps. 106.10 for Lk. 1.74. Such comments, while pointing to these psalms, actually tend to obscure the significance of Ps. 105-108 for Luke.

Only with Lk. 1.79 do Pao and Schnabel see a clear echo of Ps. 106.10, but here again they see Is. 9.2 as the passage that offers the better parallel.⁸

What Pao and Schnabel fail to notice – and other commentators as well – is that possible echoes, allusions, and references to Psalms 105, 106, and 107 keep appearing. One or two are thought to be clear echoes, whereas others are seen as simply comparable statements. But the weaker allusions gain strength once one recognises that stronger allusions from the same context are present in the infancy songs.

A Closer Look at Luke's Use of Psalms 105-108 in His Infancy Narrative Songs

In what follows, I will present the case that Luke has made significant use of Psalms 105-108 in the songs of his infancy narratives. The evidence for the use of these psalms in Luke's songs will be laid out with the aid of tables. When the wording, not just the parallel thought, is important in the comparisons, Luke's Greek will be compared to the Septuagint. The

parallel Old Testament themes ('God fills the hungry with good things' and 'will send the rich away empty') without exploring the idea that Luke is intentionally using any one passage in particular.

⁶ David Pao and Eckhard Schnabel, 'Luke', p. 256.

⁷ Ibid., p. 264.

⁸ Ibid., p. 265.

parallel quotations allow the reader to see that Luke's use of these psalms goes beyond a borrowing of the odd word or phrase but points more significantly to Luke's appropriation of the theology of the passages. Luke is functioning as an interpreter of Scripture, not just a borrower of Septuagintal phrases. The paper will conclude with a discussion of Luke's theological use of Pss. 105-108.⁹

The Use of Psalms 105 - 108 in the *Magnificat*, *Benedictus* and *Nunc Demittis*

The *Magnificat* (Luke 1.46-55)

The parallels between Mary's Song and 1 Samuel 1 and 2 – Hannah's prayer and song – may be laid out as follows:

<p>Luke 1:46-55 ⁴⁶ And Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord, ⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,⁴⁸ for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant (δούλης). Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; ⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name (ἅγιον τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ). ⁵⁰ His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. ⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud (ὑπερηφάνους) in the thoughts of their hearts.</p>	<p>1 Samuel 2:1-10 1 Hannah prayed and said, 'My heart exults in the LORD; my strength is exalted in my God. (1 Samuel 1:11 ¹¹ She made this vow: 'O LORD of hosts, if only you will look on the misery of your servant (δούλης),...) My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in my victory. ² There is no Holy One like the LORD (ἅγιος ὡς κύριος), no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God. ³ Talk no more so very proudly (μὴ καυχᾶσθε), let not arrogance (ὑψηλά) come from your mouth; for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.</p>
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⁹ My focus is on the use of Psalms 105, 106, 107 and 108 in Luke's infancy songs. I am not suggesting that allusions to other Old Testament texts are not also present. I will be referring to the number of the psalms that we find in English translations unless otherwise noted (the Septuagint numbering is off by one less). Moreover, space does not permit a more thorough discussion of Luke's overall theology of salvation history, even though some discussion of a few other passages in Luke and Acts will be made.

<p>⁵² He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; (ὑψωσεν ταπεινούς)</p> <p>⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. (πεινῶντας ἐνέπλησεν ἀγαθῶν καὶ πλουτοῦντας ἐξαπέστειλεν κενούς.)</p> <p>⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,</p> <p>⁵⁵ according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.'</p>	<p>⁴ The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble gird on strength.</p> <p>⁷ The LORD makes poor and makes rich; he brings low, he also exalts. (κύριος πτωχίζει καὶ πλουτίζει ταπεινοὶ καὶ ἀνυψοῖ) ⁸ He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honour.</p> <p>⁵ Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry (πεινῶντες) are fat with spoil....</p> <p>⁹ 'He will guard the feet of his faithful ones',</p>
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There is also a link between Luke, 1 Samuel, and Psalm 107 (LXX Ps. 106): the wording in Lk. 1.53 is closer to Ps. 107.9 than is the wording of 1 Sam. 2.5a:

<p>Luke 1:53 he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.¹⁰</p> <p>Luke 1:53 πεινῶντας ἐνέπλησεν ἀγαθῶν καὶ πλουτοῦντας ἐξαπέστειλεν κενούς.</p>	<p>Psalm 107:9 For he satisfies the thirsty, and the hungry he fills with good things.</p> <p>LXX: Psalm 106:9 ὅτι ἐχόρτασεν ψυχὴν κενὴν καὶ ψυχὴν πεινώσαν ἐνέπλησεν ἀγαθῶν</p>	<p>1 Samuel 2:5 Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry are fat with spoil....</p> <p>1 Samuel 2:5 πλήρεις ἄρτων ἡλαττώθησαν καὶ οἱ πεινῶντες παρήκαν γῆν ὅτι στείρα ἔτεκεν ἑπτὰ καὶ ἡ πολλὴ ἐν τέκνοις ἡσθένησεν</p>
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That Psalm 107 is in view along with Hannah's prayer and song is likely for three further reasons. First, Luke makes further use of the psalm

¹⁰ References in English are to the *New Revised Standard Version* unless otherwise noted.

in his writings. He repeats the theme of reversal for the rich and poor in Lk. 6.21a, 25b, and the story of Jesus' power over the sea (Lk. 8.22-25), already in Mark, seems to echo Ps. 107.23-30. Second, Luke's use of Psalms 105 and 106, and possibly Psalm 108 in the other infancy narrative songs strengthens the possibility that there might be an allusion in this song as well. Third, the conclusion to Mary's song parts ways with the parallel in 1 Sam. 2. While the word 'servant' appears in Hannah's prayer three times (1 Sam. 1.11), this only explains Mary's use of the same Greek term in 1.47. Lk. 1.54's use of an alternative Greek word for 'servant' (παιδός) has no parallel. Lk. 1.47's use of ἡγαλλίασεν and the references to 'Israel', 'Abraham', 'eternal', and 'seed' in Lk. 1.54-55, can be explained with reference to Psalm 105 (LXX Ps. 104).

<p>Luke 1:47 καὶ ἡγαλλίασεν τὸ πνεῦμά μου ἐπὶ τῷ θεῷ τῷ σωτήρί μου,</p> <p>Luke 1:54 ἀντελάβετο Ἰσραὴλ παιδὸς αὐτοῦ, μνησθῆναι ἐλέους... Λυκε 1⁵⁵ καθὼς ἐλάλησεν πρὸς τοὺς πατέρας ἡμῶν, τῷ Ἀβραάμ καὶ τῷ σπέρματι αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.</p>	<p>Psalm 104:43 καὶ ἐξήγαγεν τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν ἀγαλλιάσει καὶ τοὺς ἐκλεκτοὺς αὐτοῦ ἐν εὐφροσύνῃ</p> <p>Psalm 104:6 σπέρμα Ἀβραὰμ δοῦλοι αὐτοῦ υἱοὶ Ἰακωβ ἐκλεκτοὶ αὐτοῦ</p> <p>Psalm 104:9 ὃν διέθετο τῷ Ἀβραάμ καὶ τοῦ ὅρκου αὐτοῦ τῷ Ἰσαὰκ ¹⁰ καὶ ἔστησεν αὐτὴν τῷ Ἰακωβ εἰς πρόσταγμα καὶ τῷ Ἰσραὴλ διαθήκην αἰῶνιον</p>
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The *Benedictus* (Luke 1:68-79)

With Zechariah's song, the parallels to these psalms become clearer. (The third column adds parallel references to the Old Testament outside of the sequence of Psalms 105-108).

<p>Luke 1:68 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favourably on his people and redeemed them.</p>	<p>Psalm 106:48 Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! And let all the people say, 'Amen!' Praise the LORD!</p>	
<p>⁷¹ that we would be saved (σωτηρίαν) from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.</p>	<p>Psalm 106:10 So he saved (LXX ἔσωσεν) them from the hand of the foe and redeemed them from the power of the enemy.</p>	<p>David's song upon deliverance from all his enemies includes these words: 2 Samuel 22:1, 18 ¹ David spoke to the LORD the words of this</p>

		<p>song on the day when the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul. ¹⁸ He delivered me from my strong enemy, from those who hated me; for they were too mighty for me.</p>
<p>⁷² Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and has remembered his holy covenant,</p>	<p>Psalm 105:8 He remembers his covenant forever, the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations,...</p> <p>Psalm 106:45 For their sake he remembered his covenant, and relented according to the abundance of his steadfast love.</p>	<p>1 Chronicles 16:15a Remember his covenant forever, the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations...¹¹</p>
<p>Luke 1:73 the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us</p>	<p>Ps. 105:9: the covenant that he made with Abraham, his sworn promise to Isaac,...</p>	<p>1 Chronicles 16:16 the covenant that he made with Abraham, his sworn promise to Isaac,...</p>
<p>Luke 1:74-75: ⁷⁴ that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, ⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness before him all our days that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear,</p>	<p>Psalm 105:14, 44, 45 ¹⁴ he allowed no one to oppress them; he rebuked kings on their account,... ⁴⁴ He gave them the lands of the nations, and they took possession of the wealth of the peoples, ⁴⁵ that they might keep his statutes and observe his laws. Praise the LORD! Psalm 106:10 So he saved them from the hand of the foe, and</p>	<p>1 Chronicles 16:21 he allowed no one to oppress them; he rebuked kings on their account,</p>

¹¹ 1 Chronicles 16.8-22 is comprised of Psalm 96, 105.1-15, and 106.47-48. That Luke uses other passages from these psalms but not other passages from 1 Chronicles here is strong evidence that his source is the Psalms.

	delivered them from the hand of the enemy.	
Luke 1:79 to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.'	Psalm 107:10, 14: ¹⁰ Some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, prisoners in affliction and in irons,... ¹⁴ He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and burst their bonds apart.	Isaiah 42:6-7 ⁶ I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, ⁷ to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. Isaiah 9:2 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness (LXX: 'shadow of death,' σκιᾷ θανάτου)--on them light has shined. Isaiah 59:8 The way of peace they do not know.... Cf. Isaiah .49.9; 59.8; Micah 7:8-10

Zechariah's song makes considerable use of Psalms 105, 106 and 107. Taken each on its own, an allusion may appear uncertain, but the case that the psalms are indeed in view is strengthened when one sees that Luke has used a number of other lines from them.

He also has the overall point of Pss. 105, 106 and 107 in mind, for these psalms tell the story of salvation history. Ps. 105 tells the story positively from God's saving hand with the patriarchs to His salvation of

Israel during the Exodus from Egypt.¹² Ps. 106 tells the story negatively, noting how Israel has responded to God's acts of salvation by repeatedly rebelling.¹³ This negative narrative begins with Israel during the Exodus and goes through Israelite history up to the exile. Ps. 107 is a thanksgiving to God for redeeming His people from exile. While it begins the fifth book of the Psalter, it follows Psalms 105-106 logically. Ps. 108 is an appeal for help against enemies (allegedly during the time of King David, if the superscription is to be followed) that includes the vow to praise God for His steadfast love. God's 'steadfast love' is the linking term for Pss. 107 and 108.

In addition to these psalms, it is possible that Lk. 1.71 has 2 Sam. 22.18 in view. If so, it should be noted that the words of 2 Samuel 22 are a song of David when he was delivered from all his enemies, and that the passage comes towards the end of 2 Samuel (chapter 22 out of 24). Thus Luke has used the beginning and end songs of 1 and 2 Samuel in his own songs of salvation.¹⁴ Possibly Luke is suggesting by this that what might be said of the salvation events in Israel from Samuel to David might also be said of the salvation events of his day: God is acting to bring salvation to Israel.

Isaiah (and Micah?), moreover, is also in view, as the suggested parallels indicate. Luke's wording may be a combination of the LXX of Is. 9.2's 'shadow of death,' Is. 42.7's 'those who sit in darkness,' and Is. 59.8's 'way of peace'. By combining such passages from Isaiah, 2 Samuel, and the Psalms, Luke is echoing a Biblical ('Old Testament') salvation history that is contiguous with the salvation events of his day. He sees God's saving acts of old breaking forth in new ways through Jesus' coming, in ways that are in continuity with the salvation that God has brought to His people in the days of the patriarchs, in the time of the Exodus, in the history of Israel from Samuel to David, and in the restoration of His people from exile. The salvation that is now breaking forth in the days of Mary, Zechariah and Simeon is a salvation in continuity with God's earlier saving acts *and* a culmination of that history of salvation in God's ultimate act of salvation in Jesus.

¹² Psalms 101-106 are presented in pairs (cf. Erich Zenger, 'The God of Israel's Reign Over the World (Psalms 90-106)', in *The God of Israel and the Nations: Studies in Isaiah and the Psalms*, eds. Norbert Lohfink, Erich Zenger, trans. Everett R. Kalin (Collegeville, MN: The Order of St. Benedict, Inc., 2000; orig. German, Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk GmbH., 1994), pp. 183ff.

¹³ Similar rehearsals of Israel's history of rebellion appear in Ps. 78 (which tells why forever rebellious Israel was punished but, in God's mercy, David was chosen to rule over Israel) and Daniel 9.4-19 (which now includes all Israel in the prayer of confession of sin and an appeal for God's mercy).

¹⁴ C. Stenschke discusses this point further with reference to James W. Watts, *Psalm and Story: Inset Hymns in Hebrew Narrative*, JSOT.SS 139 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992).

Also of significance in seeing these Old Testament passages behind Luke's songs is that this salvation is a salvation for Israel, and it encompasses political and spiritual salvation (from 'our enemies', v. 71). Not only do Gentiles dwell in darkness and need God's light; so does sinful Israel (cf. Ps. 107.10, 14; Mic. 7.8-10). The salvation that Christ brings is not spiritualised and so separated from Israel, but it is a culmination of a salvation history that encompasses everything. Precisely because this salvation history is also for Israel, Paul continues to engage the Jews with the Gospel of salvation at the end of Luke's second volume (Acts 28). The rejection of the Gospel by some Jews means a rejection of God's salvation: God's culminating act of salvation comes through Jesus alone for Jews and for Gentiles who accept the message. Thus, when some of the Jews reject Paul's message of salvation through Jesus at the end of Acts, the words of Is. 6.9-10 remain in place:

²⁶ 'Go to this people and say, You will indeed listen, but never understand, and you will indeed look, but never perceive. ²⁷ For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes; so that they might not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn – and I would heal them' (Acts 28:26-27).

That the Gentiles will listen to the message of salvation (Acts 28.28) is not a rejection of Israel: Israel's rejection of the message is a final justification of the message going to those who will listen, the Gentiles. The challenge to Israel to receive the message of salvation remains – and some have. The joy of salvation being offered to Israel in the songs of Luke 1 and 2 is for all who will receive God's salvation. This point is made explicitly in Simeon's Song.

It is possible that Lk. 1.79 hints at salvation being offered not only to the Jews but also to the Gentiles. A number of passages seem to be echoed in this verse, including Ps. 107.10 and 14, 2 Samuel, and several passages in the prophets, but the emphasis is clearly on a salvation dawning on Israel.

The *Nunc Dimittis* (Luke 2:29-32)

In the three Lukan infancy narrative songs, only Simeon's song presents the coming of salvation to the Gentiles clearly. Zechariah's song remains focused on salvation for exiled Israel, although its final verse opens that salvation up to *all* in darkness. Simeon's song continues the metaphor in speaking of the coming of light.

With Simeon's *Nunc Dimittis*, we see the importance of Isaiah's new exodus motif for Luke.¹⁵ Yet the final psalm in our suggested sequence, Ps. 108, may offer the impetus for Luke's echo of passages from Isaiah to do with the nations. As there does not appear to be one passage in Isaiah in clear focus, but rather an echoing of themes in several passages, Ps. 108 may also be part of the echo. The parallels are offered in the following table.

<p>Luke 2:29-32 Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word;³⁰ for my eyes have seen your salvation (τὸ σωτήριόν),³¹ which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples (λαῶν),³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles (ἐθνῶν) and for glory to your people (λαοῦ) Israel."</p>	<p>Psalm 108:3,5,6³ will give thanks to you, O LORD, among the peoples (LXX Psalm 107.3 σοι ἐν λαοῖς), and I will sing praises to you among the nations (LXX ἐν ἔθνεσιν)...⁵ Be exalted, O God, above the heavens, and let your glory be over all the earth.⁶ Give victory with your right hand, and answer me, so that those whom you love may be rescued (LXX: save – σώσον – with your right hand...).</p> <p>Psalm 57:9, 11b⁹</p>	<p>Isaiah 52:10 The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.¹⁶</p> <p>LXX Isaiah 40:3a, b, 5³ The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord,...⁵ And the glory of the Lord shall appear, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God (τὸ σωτήριον τοῦ θεοῦ): for the Lord has spoken it.¹⁷</p> <p>Isaiah 51:4-5⁴ Listen to me, my people (λαός), and give heed to me, my nation; for a teaching will go out from me, and my justice for a light to the peoples (ἐθνῶν).⁵ I will bring near my deliverance swiftly, my salvation has gone out and my arms will rule the peoples (ἐθνη); the coastlands wait for me, and for my arm they hope.¹⁸</p> <p>Isaiah 49:6: he says, 'It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to</p>
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¹⁵ See, e.g., Joel Green's statement about Simeon's Song (*The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), p. 147): 'The Song borrows heavily from the vision of salvation resident in Isaiah 40-66 LXX, especially 40.5; 42.6; 46.13; 49.6; 52.10; 56.1; 60.1.' For a focused study on Luke's use of an Isaianic New Exodus theology, see David W. Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002; originally published by J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 2000) as volume 130 in *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* Series 2.

¹⁶ I.H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), p. 120, suggests that Is. 52.10 is in view here. But this creates a problem, since the LXX uses ἐθνῶν. Marshall suggests that the change in Lk. 2.31 to λαῶν may have been to show that the salvation in view is for both the Jews and Gentiles.

¹⁷ Pao and Schnabel, 'Luke' (p. 272), say 'prepare' and 'salvation' in Is. 40.3,5 offer the likely allusion in Lk. 2.30-31. The LXX adds to the Hebrew after 'all flesh shall see' the words 'the salvation of God' (ὄψεται πᾶσα σὰρξ τὸ σωτήριον τοῦ θεοῦ).

¹⁸ J. Green, *Luke*, p. 148.

	<p>I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples (λαοῖς); I will sing praises to you among the nations... (ἐθνέσιν)¹¹ Be exalted, O God, above the heavens. Let your glory be over all the earth.</p>	<p>raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations (εἰς φῶς ἐθνῶν), that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."¹⁹</p>
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I simply suggest here that it is possible that Luke connected Ps. 108 to Isaiah's new exodus motif. There are three reasons to offer in favour of this suggestion. First, as we have seen, Luke has had the previous three psalms in view in constructing these three songs. Second, Luke's use of both λαῶν and ἐθνῶν can be explained with Ps. 108. A number of LXX psalms also use λαοί and ἐθνοί as synonyms: the pairing of these terms appears in 18 verses of 14 Psalms, and one of these is Ps. 108. This is not the case for Is. 51.4-5 (see column three, above), where λαῶν refers to Israel and ἐθνῶν refers to the Gentiles.

Also, Ps. 108, read in its canonical context, reads as an answer to Ps. 107, an answer of praise to God for redeeming Israel from exile (Ps. 107.3). Ps. 107 linked the Exodus to the return from exile, and so it continues a salvation historical perspective from Pss. 105-106. Ps. 108, then, breaks into praise for God's saving Israel from her enemies. Also, both psalms speak of God's 'steadfast love' (Ps. 107.43; Ps. 108.4).

Pss. 57.7-11 and 60.5-12 parallel parts of Ps. 108 and refer to salvation in David's life. But Ps. 108 has Israel's restoration from captivity in view. To bring Israel out of captivity among the nations, God will also deal with the nations. Thus to restore Israel also means that God will be exalted over all the earth. Ps. 108 does not present this as a salvation extended to but in the presence of the nations. However, one might argue, as Zenger does, that salvation extended to the nations is a developing theological theme in the previous psalms (Pss. 90-106, the fourth book of the Psalter).²⁰ If so, and if Luke read Pss. 105-107 salvation historically, he

¹⁹ J. Green, *Luke*, p. 148.

²⁰ E. Zenger, 'The God of Israel's Reign....' Zenger argues that Pss. 90-106 overlap with Isaiah on the notions of God's restoration of Israel and the salvation of the nations. We have seen that Luke combines both ideas in his infancy narrative songs as well. Zenger also argues convincingly for a consecutive

may well have taken the references to salvation and God's universal rule in Ps. 108 to be a positive message for the nations as well as for Israel. Luke too may have seen the same hope for Israel and the Gentiles in these psalms just as much as in Isaiah.

Luke's Salvation History

To stress the importance of noting Luke's use of the psalms, I would draw attention to a matter raised by Peter Doble. Doble complains that scholars tend to downplay the role of the Psalms in Luke-Acts.²¹ He suggests that, in fact, quite the opposite is the case for Luke, and he attempts to demonstrate this through a look at Luke's distinctive passion narrative material. He argues that Luke actually alludes *only* to the Psalms of suffering or about David.²² Thus Doble insists that it is not Isaiah but the Psalms that account for Luke's own interpretation of the Passion. Whatever we make of this argument, the importance of the Psalms in both the infancy and passion narratives is certain.

We have seen how, in his use of the psalms in the infancy narrative songs, Luke finds, in passages presenting a salvation historical perspective, the theological understanding necessary to explain the events he is about to describe in his two volume work.

Luke's use of these psalms to show that God's universal salvation and reign is dawning is particularly interesting when one gives thought to the theological message of the fourth book of the Psalter, Psalms 90-106. True, Luke does not limit himself to this collection since he continues into the next book of the Psalter with references to Ps. 107 and possibly Ps. 108, as we have seen. Yet, as Erich Zenger demonstrates, this fourth book of the Psalter presents a vision of God's universal reign similar to Isaiah's that combines a restoration of Israel motif with an extension of salvation to all

reading of these psalms. Psalm 100, e.g., brings the previous 'Royal YHWH' psalms (93-99) to a 'high point', referencing or quoting earlier lines (see list on p. 179) in calling 'Israel and the nations to the common acknowledgement of YHWH's reign over the whole world. Thereby the prerogative of Israel named in Ps 95.6-7 is extended to the nations who acknowledge YHWH' (p. 178). Ps. 100 even 'places the covenant formula ... in the mouth of the nations as a confession of their "new" relationship with God' (p. 178). Zenger emphasises that the nations do not *replace* Israel in these psalms. He concludes his examination of Pss. 90-106 as follows: 'the reign of YHWH over creation, established from of old, has chosen Zion, in order, on the one hand, to work *צדקה* ('saving deeds') here in the midst of YHWH's people Israel and in order, on the other hand, from Zion to "lure" the nations, fascinated by the God of Sinai's palpable steadfast love for Israel, into YHWH's covenant of peace, and to let them live peacefully next to and with one another on the basis of the "truth of God" common to Israel and the nations - "Know the LORD (alone) is God. It is he that made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture (Ps 103.3)"' (p. 190).

²¹ Peter Doble, 'Luke 24.26, 44 - Songs of God's Servant: David and his Psalms in Luke-Acts', *JSNT* 28.3 (March, 2006), pp. 267-283.

²² Peter Doble, 'Luke 24.26, 44', p. 269.

nations.²³ Similarly, Luke has in view the whole sweep of salvation history, from the patriarchs to the return from exile. His understanding of salvation history is not narrowed to a 'return from exile' motif, as important as this is as a part of salvation history.

This theology of salvation history, of God's acts of salvation and of Israel's acts of sinfulness despite God, is fundamental to Luke's theological reflection on the present time. Stephen offers a version of Israel's repeated sinfulness that is similar to Ps. 106 just prior to his being stoned in Acts 7. Paul and Barnabas tell a similar history of Israel in Acts 13. Yet, despite Israel's sinfulness, God's merciful salvation has appeared in Jesus to Israel and, through them, has come to the nations. Luke ends his second volume (Acts 28.25-27) with the words of Is. 6.9-10 applying to the Jews: they are blind and deaf and stand apart from God's salvation being offered to them. God's salvation has gone with Paul to the heart of the Gentile world, to Rome, and so salvation history is fulfilled with the irony that Israel remains hardened. Thus Paul's ministry concludes with him in prison and yet offering this salvation that has come to Rome to the Jews, who continue to reject it. Luke's theological statement here is that Israel's salvation sung about in the songs of Mary, Zechariah and Simeon is an open offer: Psalms 105 and 106 stand before Israel as a challenge over how they will respond to God's consistent working of salvation in history. Will they respond positively (Ps. 105) or negatively (Ps. 106) to the mercy that God offers from generation to generation? The answer to the disciples' question in Acts 1.6, 'Lord, are you at this time going to redeem Israel?' is answered in Acts with this challenge of these two psalms in Paul's ministry to the Jews in Rome in Acts 28. The rejection of Paul's message means that salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, who will listen (Acts 28.28), and yet this does not mean a rejection of Jews: some of them do believe (Acts 28.24). The offer of salvation remains open to the Jews if they will follow their history of God's acts of salvation through to what God has now done in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 28.31).

Finally, Luke's use of these salvation historical psalms sheds light on the question of the eschatology of Luke-Acts. Approaching Luke-Acts from the assumption that Christianity is initially – from the time of John and Jesus – focused on an imminent eschatology, a scholar may well conclude that Luke shifts the emphasis to a present fulfilment. This assumption lay at the heart of much New Testament interpretation in the twentieth century: many scholars believed that an originally enthusiastic, charismatic, and apocalyptic (imminent end) perspective in the early church met the reality

²³ Erich Zenger, 'The God of Israel's Reign...', pp. 161-190. See my encapsulation of his argument in footnote 20.

of a 'delayed parousia' and emerged towards the end of the first century with an 'early catholic', more settled version of Christianity. This required a shift from an apocalyptic Christianity to a salvation history perspective.

An alternative perspective, however, would be to see greater continuity between the salvation events in Jesus' and the early Church's ministry and the great salvation events of Israel's history. So, as Joel Green has noted in regard to Acts 13.17-23, Luke links Jesus to Israel's story by seeing this as the *next phase in salvation history*. Thus there is *continuity in God's purpose in the past, present, and future*. So, hermeneutically, *comparisons between Israel's past story and Jesus' story* should be expected.²⁴ For Luke, this understanding is not something he or the late second century Church comes up with as a theological move to explain a theological crisis, the supposed delay of the parousia. It is rather a matter of Scriptural interpretation. Some of the key Scriptures for this salvation historical perspective were in Psalms 105-108. By working these psalms' perspective of salvation history into the infancy narratives, Luke polishes the theological lens for viewing the events he describes in the Gospel of Luke and Acts.

Thus, we ought to conclude, Luke leaves us this lens by which to understand events in our day as well. By looking back into Israel's history behind his narrative, Luke encourages the reader to project the same perspective beyond Acts 28: God's mighty work of salvation continues. There is no expectation of a cessation of miracles, signs, or wonders after an apostolic period. How could there be? He who has been actively working to show His mercy in Israel's past is working continually to show forth His saving glory among the nations.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have explored the use of Psalms 105-108 in Luke's infancy narrative songs. From an initial argument that these psalms are particularly in focus for Luke, I proceeded to argue that Luke uses these psalms, along with other Old Testament texts (notably, 2 Samuel and Isaiah), to articulate a Biblical salvation historical perspective for reading his two volume work. Luke's work as an interpreter of Scripture, rather than as a theologian offering a solution to the problem of the supposed delay of the Parousia, explains his understanding of salvation. He does not borrow words from the Septuagint to give his theologising a pseudo-Biblical authority; rather, he articulates a Biblical theology of salvation history that is precisely what he

²⁴ Joel B. Green, *The Theology of the Gospel of Luke, New Testament Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 26.

finds to be true of the salvation events of his own day. There is, to be sure, an unfolding of salvation history, a narrative that has taken a major step forward in the coming of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, in the extending of salvation to the Jews and to the Gentiles. But the Scriptures of Israel themselves give Luke the answers to salvation historical questions, among which are 'Is Israel in need of salvation?', 'Will Gentiles be included in God's saving work?' and 'Does salvation remain open to Israel?'.

That Luke uses Psalms 105-108 at the beginning of his two volumes to direct the reader to an Old Testament salvation historical reading of his own history is also an important point to consider in light of current scholarship. The focus given to Isaiah for understanding Jesus' ministry and Luke's interpretation of His ministry is not misplaced. But Luke is a Biblical theologian, an interpreter of the Old Testament, and not locked into a view of salvation history that is limited to the return of Israel from exile or even to an 'Exodus – Return from Exile' narrative pattern. His use of 2 Samuel and of the Psalms demonstrates a broader understanding of salvation history, one that begins with the Patriarchs and one that includes God's saving acts (Ps. 105), Israel's rebellion (Ps. 106), Israel's restoration (Ps. 107), and a universal salvation that would include the Gentiles (Ps. 108 read along with Isaiah).

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7

The Use of Psalms in Mark

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Introduction

The Gospel of Mark is not noted for its frequent and extensive quotations from the Old Testament. In this respect, Mark is not like, for example, Matthew's Gospel, Romans or Hebrews. There are, however, some significant quotations and many allusions (sometimes subtle, sometimes not so subtle) that shape our reading of the text. Some of these are from the Psalms.

This paper will survey the quotations from and a few of the allusions to the Psalms that I find (and that I find *significant*) within the Gospel of Mark. There will be special focus on several fascinating Markan texts in which Old Testament background texts (in this case highlighting those from the Psalms) significantly shape the way we are expected to interpret those Markan texts. In the examples to be examined, Mark seems deliberately to say more than is obvious on the surface of the narrative.

Those who have encountered my previous publications on Mark's Gospel will know already that I consider Mark's Gospel to be a literary and theological masterpiece, written by a subtle writer and profound thinker. For centuries scholars seemed unable to see past Mark's relatively simple surface story line and his less than elegant Greek. So they assumed that Mark was a crude assembler of fairly randomly collected traditions, that he produced numerous clumsy constructions, that he told stories but often forgot to give the punch lines, and that he generally did a fairly mediocre job of writing a Gospel. The longer I study Mark, the more sure I am that this perception is absolutely wrong. Of course, I am not alone. Gone are the days when reputable scholars made statements like these: '[Mark] did not think through from one point in his presentation to the next . . . Not by a single syllable does he indicate that he desires to see two facts brought into connection which he happens to tell one after the other.'¹

Still as recently as 1993 one reputable scholar could still write: 'The Gospel of Mark contains no ciphers, no hidden meanings . . . no symbolism of discipular (sic!) enlightenment in the miracles. No "way"-symbolism for

¹ Wilhelm Wrede, *Messianic Secret* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 1971 [originally published 1901]), p. 132.

cross-bearing. No bread-symbolism for the Eucharist. No boat-symbolism for the Church. No voyage-symbolism for Christian mission . . . No open end celebrating faith over verifiability . . . Mark's meaning lies on the surface.'² I remember my first reaction on reading these lines: 'Me thinks he doth protest too much'.

Of course the danger in seeking 'hidden meanings' is that clever interpreters find them even where the author could not possibly have intended them. But the solution is to look more carefully, not to stop looking.

I have sometimes compared the whole situation to the frustrating experience people have had trying to see the hidden picture in those old 3D posters that were popular about 20 years ago.³ I first encountered this particular 'art form' in a large poster on a wall. It looked like a bunch of squiggles and out of focus patches of colour. The person who hung the poster tried to convince me that if I stood about a meter from the wall, relaxed my eyes, and looked *through* the poster, then gradually a picture would emerge, an eagle holding out a tiny minnow in its beak, ready to drop it into the open mouth of its starving little eaglet. I thought he was putting me on – until I saw it for myself! After that it did not really matter how many sceptics told me I was mistaken or putting them on. Nobody and nothing could ever make me believe again that what I saw was just a figment of my imagination. I had seen it!

My brother, who teaches physics, has one such poster in his classroom that contains a hidden portrait of Albert Einstein. More commonly such posters contain landscapes, or moonscapes, or nature scenes. You strain and strain your eyes but all you usually see are squiggles and random colours and shapes. Then the person beside you says, 'Just relax! It will gradually appear and when you see it, you will know that you see it!' It keeps on happening, except not to everyone. Those who never see are frustrated to no end, or they think the rest of the world is going crazy, or they think it is all a sinister plot to make them look silly.

But when you see the eagle, just try to be a sympathetic listener to the person beside you who tries desperately to convince you it is all in your over-active imagination. Once you have seen it, you will never again be convinced that it is not really there below the surface of squiggles and blurry shapes.

² R.H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), p. 1.

³ For contemporary examples, see <http://www.magiceye.com>, accessed 21 April 2009.

Mark's Gospel was once considered little more than random squiggles and blurry shapes. But more and more, people who invest creative energy examining Mark are starting to see the eagles and the Einsteins. Yes, a few commentators are still holding out. They sometimes write brilliant commentaries on the colours and shapes, helpfully summarising all the alternative viewpoints uttered by everyone else who has ever studied the colours and shapes. But such interpreters of Mark are a small and shrinking minority. The majority has found ways of looking that indeed result in the mysterious appearance of the eagles and the Einsteins. When they begin to see them, they remain on the lookout for the subtle and brilliant points and portraits that Mark embeds within his narratives and the subtle clues Mark drops that there is more than just the surface story line for those with eyes to see and ears to hear. There is more to be discovered in the feeding narratives than how many loaves were broken and how many basketfuls were left over. There is more to be discovered in Mark 13 than a list of 'signs'. For those ready to hear the message of the cross, Mark presents Jesus from the start as more than a wonder-worker. Mark did not botch his ending nor did copyists lose it. Mark wrote a Gospel that is profound and provocative.

This paper will not attempt to summarise all the eagles and Einsteins to be discerned within Mark's narrative; rather, it will focus on a few that come into view when we pay attention to the ways in which Mark incorporates quotations from and allusions to the Psalms.

Mark's Direct Quotations from the Psalms

This section will examine the *direct* quotations – there are five of them (six if one counts repetitions), though not all interpreters have recognised the first of these. Strictly speaking, *Mark* never does quote from the Psalms – that is to say, Mark, speaking in the voice of the narrator, never does. Mark's Gospel is not like the Gospel of Matthew, in which the narrator constantly comments on the plot. 'This was to fulfil what had been spoken through the prophet' (and then come quotations from the Old Testament). In Mark all quotations from the Psalms come from the mouths of the characters, and that is also true of every other quotation from the Old Testament with the notable exception of the Isaiah-Malachi quotation in 1:2,3.

Mark's quotations from the Psalms are the following: God's voice from heaven at Jesus' baptism quotes Psalm 2; the pilgrims who celebrate the king on the colt quote Psalm 118; Jesus then also quotes Psalm 118 and later Psalm 110 in the temple, and he quotes Psalm 22 from the cross.

Mark's story world is populated with divine and human voices, insiders and outsiders, who know the Scriptures and who quote them. Mark, as author and narrator, joins them in combining two texts that he quotes at the beginning and then by alluding to many more after that. Mark uses these quotations and allusions to shape the *reader's* interpretation of what is happening. Mark's five quotations from the Psalms will now be addressed in the order in which they appear in Mark.

The Voice at Jesus' Baptism

It is the voice of God that first quotes from the Psalms in Mark's Gospel. God speaks God's own words in the composite quotation that makes up the baptismal commissioning of Jesus: 'You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well-pleased'.⁴ This is a brilliant tri-partite composition that combines three different Old Testament texts and conveys three important themes.⁵

Examining these three in reverse order permits us to leave the quotation from Psalm 2 for last. Jesus is the one with whom God is well-pleased, the one on whom God's favour rests. The words and phrases come from Isaiah 42:1. That means that Jesus is being identified as the Servant of the Lord, – The Chosen One, in whom God's soul delights, the one into whom God sends the divine Spirit. The larger context in Isaiah 42 helps to define the mission of Jesus. He will faithfully bring about God's justice, but will do so with gentleness, with compassion, with self-sacrifice. He will not cry out or raise his voice . . . he will open blind eyes and release the prisoners. What Luke's Gospel says explicitly (see Luke 4:18,19), Mark's Gospel hides between the lines.

Working backwards, we hear the heavenly voice refer to 'the son, whom I love'. The expression is from Genesis 22:2, where Abraham is called to take his son, whom he loves, and lead that beloved son up to the mountain of sacrifice. God will do the same for 'the beloved Son of God' as the book of Mark proceeds towards its climax. In the end Isaac is spared when an animal takes his place. In Jesus' case it will be the other way around.

Finally, still working backwards, we come to the quotation from the Psalms. 'You are my Son!' The quotation is brief, but the context makes it unmistakable. Psalm 2 is a Messianic enthronement Psalm. It is a Psalm about God's enemies, rulers and kings, who plot against God and God's Messiah. In that sense, the plot line of Psalm 2 is similar to the plot line of

⁴ All Scripture quotations are from NIV unless otherwise noted.

⁵ I.H. Marshall, 'Son of God or Servant of Yahweh? – A Reconsideration of Mark 1:11'. *NTS* 15 (1968-69), pp. 326-36.

Mark. But though the enemies will mock and deride, God will have the last laugh. ‘The One enthroned in heaven laughs’ (2:4). God has a secret plan, a covert plan of attack: God is installing God’s very own Son on Zion’s hill! ‘You are my Son’, (2:7) says God to the one who is destined to rule the nations.

The voice from heaven in Mark is simple and straightforward, an affirmation of God’s love for Jesus, God’s Son: ‘You are my son, the beloved one, on whom my favour rests’. But below the surface, for those with eyes to see, it is far more. Jesus is not only being assured of his Father’s love, he ‘is also being inaugurated into a Messianic ministry, characterised by the way of the cross. This time a ram will not take the place of ‘the Son’. Instead, his death will forever end the sacrifice of animals for the atonement of human sin. Yes, Jesus is God’s chosen Servant and Son, but chosen for a path of suffering and death, chosen for the way of the cross.”⁶

The significance of this in Mark’s Roman imperial context can hardly be over-estimated. Mark’s opening verse already challenges the imperial cult. Not Caesar, but Jesus, is the ‘Son of God’, the one whose advent is ‘Good News’.⁷ Now, as the divine voice commissions the Son, it announces God’s universal kingship over this world’s royal pretenders, a rule to be accomplished through a suffering servant, a sacrificial lamb, an obedient Son.⁸ Perceptive readers of Mark can see the shape of the eagle appearing below the surface of the text.

Hosanna to the ‘Coming One’

Mark’s second quotation from the Psalms is also from a Messianic Psalm. It is quoted precisely when Jesus, the one who is destined to rule the nations, demonstrates what kind of kingdom he brings – a peaceable kingdom, ruled with gentleness by a king who rides a donkey (cf. Zechariah 9:9,10).

The celebrating pilgrims shout ‘Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; blessed is the coming kingdom of our father, David! Hosanna in the highest!’ (Mark 11:9, quoting Psalm 118:25,26). The quotation is from a Psalm perfectly suited to the occasion.

⁶ Timothy J. Geddert, *Mark: Believers Church Bible Commentary* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2001), p. 35.

⁷ C.A. Evans, ‘Mark’s Incipit and the Priene Calendar Inscription: From Jewish Gospel to Greco-Roman Gospel’, *Journal of Greco-Roman Christianity and Judaism (JGRCh)* 1 (2000), pp. 67-81.

⁸ Rikk Watts, ‘The Psalms in Mark’s Gospel’, in *The Psalms in the New Testament*, ed. by Steve Moyise and J.J. Menken Maarten (New York: T&T Clark Int., 2004), pp. 25-45.

Psalm 118 celebrates the victory over the nations that Psalm 2 had predicted. Israel's Royal King is celebrated as he comes to Zion in a great victorious procession. He has defeated all God's enemies, initiated the new exodus, indeed the new creation. He arrives in the temple where priests bless God, bless the king who comes in God's name, and bless the people.

Israel, now in exile to the Romans, recited Psalm 118 as they remembered God's past acts of deliverance and hoped for another. This Psalm was regularly used in preparation for the Passover. So it is in Mark 11. Jesus joins other pilgrims streaming into Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, but he becomes himself the centre of the celebration, as Psalm 118 is used to celebrate his coming. It is a subtle use of Psalm 118, for *in the liturgy* those 'coming in the name of the Lord' are the *pilgrims*, the worshippers; they are coming in the Lord's name to celebrate the feast. *In Mark* the 'one who comes' is more than a pilgrim; he is the goal of the pilgrimage. He is more than a celebrant at the Passover Feast; he is the Passover lamb. He is God's royal king, who will accomplish deliverance once more. But he will not do it through military combat. Ironically, he will not play the role of the angel of death; as the Passover liturgies unfold, Jesus will become the lamb whose blood is applied to make redemption possible.

In a much deeper sense than the pilgrims accompanying Jesus that day through Jerusalem's gates could possibly have realised, this one who comes in the name of the Lord, this 'Coming One' that Malachi and John the Baptist had prophesied about, this perfect worshipper ultimately becomes the one *to be worshipped*, as he fulfils his human and divine mission and embodies the meaning of the Passover. Later Mark will drop just enough hints in his text that we can identify the precise moment of Jesus' great announcement: 'The hour has come!' It is the midnight hour on Passover evening.⁹ It is the very minute when other celebrants who have kept the Passover vigil, breathe a sigh and say, 'Maybe next year!' Jesus, in contrast, will be led away to the slaughter. By giving his life, he will redeem his people, overthrow empires and renew creation.

The Son becomes a Stone

Mark's third quotation from the Psalms comes in Jesus' temple teaching. The quotation is again from Psalm 118, the Psalm celebrating God's victory and Israel's redemption. Jesus quotes Psalm 118:22 just after narrating the parable of the vineyard workers. 'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is

⁹ Timothy J Geddert, 'Therefore Keep Watch: Mark 14:17 – 15:15; 13:32-37', in *Double Take: New Meanings from Old Stories* (Winnipeg: Kindred Press, 2007), pp. 87-93.

marvellous in our eyes' (Mark 12:10). It seems an abrupt change of imagery. The vineyard owners kill a 'Son' and a rejected 'Stone' is restored to a place of honour. There may well be a word play in the underlying Hebrew between 'Ben' and 'Eben', but this plays no role in Mark's Greek text.

In Jesus' parable, unfaithful custodians of God's vineyard kill God's very Son, God's beloved. God responds by vindicating this Son / this Stone, by raising him up to be a cornerstone. The unfaithful custodians – these are none other than Israel's religious establishment, 'the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law' (Mark 8:31), who have, all along, been collaborating with Rome and its puppet rulers (3:6; 10:33; cf. 15:1). God will redeem Israel when Rome is defeated and collaborators with Rome are replaced by those who, unlike Jerusalem's power-brokers, side with the slaughtered Son, the rejected Stone, the one whose resurrection from death signals his own vindication and God's victory over all who repress others and abuse power, whether that be through military might or religious oppression.

The corrupt leaders of Israel are all leaves – no figs; they have turned God's house into a den of thieves; they devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Their doom will be sealed when they kill the Son, for God will raise up that Son, now as a new temple. Jesus will be the capstone / cornerstone of the new temple. But because it is a temple 'not made with hands' (Mark 14:58), Jesus is not merely Stone but still Son, still the rightful heir of the vineyard. God now gives that vineyard to new custodians, to those who follow the Servant who becomes a ransom, who learn from him that greatness is found in service (10:43-45).

Sitting with David's Lord

Later Jesus quotes Psalm 110:1 and only hints that he is talking about himself. 'The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet"' (Mark 12:36). This verse, the one quoted more frequently in the New Testament than any other from the Hebrew Scriptures, seems designed by Jesus (or at least by Mark) to do three things:

First, it clarifies that Jesus is not *merely* David's son (he is that!) but *also* David's Lord (for he sets up a kingdom that transcends even David's). This is high Christology – Jesus is identified with the very Lord whom David himself worshipped.

Second, it explains why the Messianic kingdom, though truly inaugurated, is not yet consummated – there is still a mop-up operation to be carried out while this already and not yet kingdom grows from

its mustard seed beginnings to its ultimate destiny in power and glory. Yes, David's Son is already enthroned (or at least will be within the next few chapters of Mark's narrative), but even after that, there are enemies yet to be defeated! (One imagines Mark's persecuted community nodding in agreement, but not too vigorously, lest enemy spies have infiltrated their house fellowship.)

Third, it continues to develop a pervasive theme in Mark, that Jesus came as a non-violent victor, one who entrusts his case fully into God's hands. Jesus *demonstrates* in the Jerusalem temple and he *predicts* its doom along with the doom of its loyal but corrupt custodians. But Jesus will not lift a finger against his enemies. The day will come when all God's enemies will be under Jesus' feet; Jesus' present enemies will one day see him seated at the right hand of Power. Yet throughout this whole volatile situation, Jesus himself will be a pacifist. God will vindicate him and his cause.

It should be noted that, though Jesus does not exactly quote Psalm 110 during his trial, Mark surely intends readers to see Psalm 110 in Jesus' response to the High Priest's question: 'Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?' Combining Daniel 7's reference to the authoritative Son of Man with Psalm 110's reference to God's seated viceroy, Jesus responds: 'I am, and you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven' (Mark 14:62). A condemned criminal will someday preside over God's Kingdom and bring to justice corrupt priests, judges, kings and emperors.¹⁰

Reading Psalm 22 Backwards

We come to the fifth and final quotation from the Psalms in Mark, Jesus' so-called cry of dereliction from the cross, his direct quotation of Psalm 22:1, '*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?*' Mark first transcribes the Hebrew into Greek and then provides the translation. 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (Mark 15:34).

How many historical-critical scholars have jumped on this text, gleefully rejoicing that Mark was too unsophisticated and un-theological to doctor up the tradition and hide the embarrassing fact that Jesus really did die in utter despair, with far less courage, dignity and poise than a host of Greek and Hebrew martyrs before him. They believe that Mark let the cat out of the bag, unlike the more illustrious and capable (and historically suspect) evangelists, who were decent enough to paint lovely portraits of a trusting Messiah who gently commits his Spirit into the Father's hand

¹⁰ See especially Watts, p. 41.

while celebrating his own victory, 'It is accomplished.' Mark unwittingly (because he was not known for having much wit) lets the real truth slip through – Jesus died a defeated and disillusioned man, whose cause ultimately failed. So far those historical-critical scholars.

Nothing could be further from the truth. These scholars have simply never glimpsed the face of Einstein below the surface of the text! In Mark, Jesus does not die in despair. I will never join those who think they can reconstruct an historical Jesus more accurately than Matthew, Mark, Luke and John did long before them. A bit of careful reading helps us trace the lines of Mark's portrait clearly enough to see that there is no despairing Jesus to be found in Mark.

Markan scholars often refer to 'passion predictions' in Mark. There are none! There are only 'passion/resurrection predictions'. Every time Jesus tries to help his followers anticipate and accept the passion that he knows is inevitable, he clearly predicts that a resurrection will follow! It is not only in Luke that Jesus wrestles through to victory in Gethsemane and then moves confidently forward as he drinks God's cup and mounts his throne on Calvary's cross. Mark paints exactly the same picture.

One sees it in his pronouncement after a night watch of prayer: 'The hour has come!' (14:41) – the midnight hour, Passover night, the hour of deliverance (though it costs the life of a lamb!). One sees it in both Jesus' silence and his speech during his double trial. Jesus knows he is innocent, yet he is willing to be condemned. He submits to a human trial now because he knows his present judges will one day bow before his throne when the Son of Man is seated in judgment at the right hand of the Mighty One. One sees it in Mark's portrayal of Jesus taking the place of Barabbas, a remarkable though subtle symbolic enactment of the substitutionary nature of Jesus' death. The true faithful Son of the Father takes the place of 'another son of another father' (Bar-Abbas – Son of the Father).

By the way, how does one embed an *Aramaic* word play into a *Greek* text? One does it by setting up the word play in advance. In the Bartimaeus story Mark tells his readers that 'bar' means 'son' (10:46). In the Gethsemane narrative he tells us that 'Abba' means 'Father' (14:36). Then at just the right moment Mark springs his word play on the reader: Jesus, the faithful Son, who had said to his own ABBA, Father, 'Not what I will, but what you will' (14:36), ultimately takes the place of another son of another father, Bar-Abbas. This condemned but released rebel stands symbolically in Mark's text for all who deserve to die but are set free because Jesus was willing to take their place. Barabbas stands for all who think Rome will be defeated by insurrectionists and their swords, but need to learn that the empire will fall to God's more powerful kingdom, because

its Messianic king chooses nonviolence and martyrdom over the weaker weapons of steel. Jesus and his weapons replace them and theirs. Subtle and profound – but what else would we expect from Mark!? He has been training the reader from the very first verse to look below the surface of the text.

No, Jesus did not die in despair. He died, confident that his Father would vindicate him and his cause in a great resurrection three days hence. He died, knowing that his death would atone for the sins of the world and would be in place of those who deserved a death he did not deserve. He died, knowing that his death was according to God's own perfect will, which Jesus was fully committed to carry out to the end.

So why then does he cry out in despair? He doesn't! He asks a question: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' He asks the question because he wants the perceptive onlooker, or at least because Mark wants the perceptive reader, to supply the answer. As Robert Fowler once wrote: 'What better way to channel our thinking than to challenge us with unanswered questions?'¹¹ God has abandoned the chosen Messiah, the beloved Son, the faithful Servant – but only for a short season, because God will never abandon the world this Son came to save.

If we look closely, we see that Psalm 22 does not suddenly enter Mark's text on the lips of Jesus.¹² It is there already in Mark 15:24 as the soldiers gamble for Jesus' garments. The Psalmist had written: 'They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing' (Psalm 22:18). It is there already in Mark 15:27 and 29, as the crucified Jesus is encircled by mocking criminals and derisive crowds. The Psalmist had written: '[They] open their mouths wide against me . . . a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet' (Psalm 22:13,16). It is there already in verse 31 as the chief priests and scribes make fun of this one who saved others but cannot even save himself. The Psalmist had already written: 'All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads. "He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him"' (Psalm 22:7,8).

Mark has built Psalm 22 into his passion narrative before he quotes Jesus' question. Interestingly he has done so exactly in reverse order. As we move through Mark 15 we are moving backwards through Psalm 22. In the end, we reach the beginning, as Jesus ends his earthly life by quoting the beginning of the Psalm, that great question: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' He knows the answer: it is part of the mystery of

¹¹ Robert Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1991), p. 126.

¹² Frank Matera, *The Kingship of Jesus: Composition and Theology in Mark 15* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1982), p. 40.

God's plan to save the world, more immediately to save those disciples who have followed Jesus but abandoned him in the crisis (14:27,28). The shepherd will be struck down and the sheep scattered. But Jesus has known all along: he will be going ahead of them into Galilee, where the discipleship road can begin again, this time in the presence and power of the resurrected one!

Jesus did not die in despair with a cry of dereliction on his lips, not even in Mark – *especially not in Mark*. Those who read the narrative that way are standing alongside the uncomprehending crowds and the mocking religious rulers; they are seeing blotches of colour and squiggly lines, but catch no glimpse of the real picture that was there all along. All they can see is one whose external appearance betrays no 'beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him, He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering' (Isaiah 53:2b,3a).

Jesus did not die in despair, not in Mark, not anywhere in biblical literature. Truth is, the psalmist who first penned Psalm 22:1 was not in despair either. Psalms of Lament are not Psalms of despair. Laments are really Psalms of reorientation. The psalmist leads God's people to realise that even situations that might well lead to despair do not have to for those who can see that even there God is at work. God stands with God's faithful people in hard times, working out divine purposes beyond our ability to imagine, showing us the deeper picture behind the squiggly lines and blotches of colour that often confront even the most faithful.

It would not be a stretch to imagine the Markan community, pondering long and deeply the portrait that Mark paints of the crucified Messiah, hearing the penetrating cry from the cross, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' and then gradually immersing themselves back into the rest of Psalm 22, even those parts that Mark neither quotes nor alludes to. As they immerse themselves in Psalm 22, they discover that it is not only about the psalmist, not only about Israel, not only about Jesus – it is also about them.

They hear the Psalm encouraging them as well, 'Commit your cause to the LORD; let him deliver – let him rescue the one in whom he delights!' (22:8 NRSV). They hear the psalmist's words of assurance, 'He did not hide his face from me, but heard when I cried to him' (22:24b NRSV), and they realise again that this was not only about the psalmist, and about their Lord; it is true for them as well. They break forth with the psalmist in words of praise, 'Dominion belongs to the Lord' (22:28a NRSV), and in words of commitment, 'I shall live for him' (22:29c NRSV). They recommit themselves to their mission, to spread the good

news of the Gospel to the ends of the earth, to the end of the age, as they reach the end of Psalm 22, ‘They will proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn – for he has done it’.

Matthew makes that point with his Great Commission and John with Jesus’ cry, ‘It is finished’. Mark makes the point by embedding Psalm 22 deeply into his narrative, reading it backwards for Jesus, so that we can read it forwards ever after! ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ we ask. God answers, ‘I will never truly forsake you, though it may seem like it for a time. Soon! Soon I will establish my Dominion forever.’

Mark has prepared his readers to stand at the foot of the cross, and as Jesus breathes his last (15:37), to respond with eyes that see and ears that hear. We see in the torn temple veil (15:38) the first glimpses of Jesus reordering religion . . . and to hear in the Roman Centurion’s confession (15:39) Jesus reordering politics. Mark’s readers know they need not fear the temporary power of Jerusalem’s corrupt rulers, nor Rome’s over-confident imperial claims. The one destined to rule the nations has mounted his throne and shed his blood. Resurrection and final victory lie ahead!

Summary

Those are the five quotations from the Psalms in Mark, all of them there to help paint a picture and develop Mark’s central message. Psalm 2 conspires with other texts to allude, already in the first chapter, to the fact that Jesus, this humble, gentle Servant of the Lord, this one who will lay down his life in obedience to the Father’s perfect will, will someday rule the nations! Psalm 118 in the mouths of the pilgrims joins Zechariah 9 in Mark’s narrative to allude to this faithful, humble pilgrim, who is ultimately the King, the LORD in fact, the one destined to shatter chariots and battle bows, so that a kingdom of peace can rule from sea to sea. Psalm 118 in the mouth of Jesus assures those willing to listen, that though he will be killed by evil men, he and his followers will ultimately take their place as faithful custodians of the people of God, in fact as the very temple within which heaven and earth meet. Psalm 110 is quoted by Jesus so as to confound his enemies, but also so that those with eyes to see will be assured: The kingdom, a kingdom greater than David’s, truly is being established, though enemies still abound. We need not despair, for the Lord is on the throne and the end is in sight. Psalm 22, brilliantly embedded into the whole narrative of the passion, allows those *without eyes to see* to go right on mocking this weak and helpless would-be saviour who cannot save himself. But it invites those *with eyes to see* to catch glimpses of the world’s Saviour, who did not save himself precisely so that he could save the world!

Much more could be said about Mark's direct quotations from the Psalms. Hopefully, enough has been said to inspire all interpreters of Mark to keep peering through the narrative. The danger is that our creativity and our fantasy will run away with us and we will imagine connections that nobody else can recognise. But the danger on the other side is far greater – that we stare at the squiggles and patches of colour and fail to see eagles and Einsteins brilliantly embedded just under the surface of the poster, provocatively sketched between the lines of the narrative.

Mark's Indirect Quotations from the Psalms

There is room to examine only one of many texts that make subtle allusions to texts from the Psalms. It will have to be representative of others. It is impossible to say how many texts in Mark contain allusions to texts from the Psalms. That is not because there are many thousand; it is because we can never be completely certain where to draw the line. An author, a community and a tradition that are immersed in the themes and the images of their Holy Scriptures will often speak and write and think and imagine in ways that weave together aspects of those Holy Scriptures that they themselves might not always be able explicitly to identify.

Sometimes, one suspects, an author is not really saying to the reader: Go investigate this Old Testament text and you will understand what I am saying here. Rather authors, deeply immersed in their Scriptures, simply shape their narratives in ways that betray how significantly they themselves have been shaped by the content of those Scriptures. At other times, one suspects, the allusions are deliberate. An author pulls together a set of Old Testament texts and uses them to create a narrative that hints just enough at what is going on that perceptive readers can plausibly be expected to 'get it'. I am quite convinced that Mark does that – quite often in fact.

Perhaps we ask: Why would Mark write like that? He had good precedent in his Lord, who often spoke in riddles and stories, which he only sometimes explained! Like Jesus before him, Mark would rather call for eyes that see and ears that hear than lay it all out clearly for the half-deaf and the half-blind. Like Jesus, Mark would rather open blind eyes than describe the landscape for those who cannot see; he would rather open deaf ears than draw pictures for those who cannot hear. We turn to one example of what I am talking about.

Mark 4, the parable chapter about the unstoppable coming of a kingdom that cannot fail, ends with what, on the surface, appears to be a 'cute little story' about a tired preacher catching a nap in less than ideal circumstances. Jesus is hushed by the same wind that is shattering the

disciples' eardrums and terrorising even these seasoned fishermen. Soon Jesus sleeps peacefully in the bottom of a boat, rocked to sleep by the waves that are rocking the disciples' world. Sleeping in a crisis is not always the right response. In Gethsemane, for example, Jesus chides his disciples for sleeping when they should be watchful, should be praying, should be preparing for the battle ahead (14:41). But sometimes sleeping in the crisis is precisely right, as the psalmist said, 'I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety' (Psalm 4:8).

Mark seems to suggest that the disciples simply do not 'get it'. Jesus has just spoken at length about a kingdom that cannot fail, that cannot be defeated, that will produce its intended harvest. 'Do not be deceived by its mustard seed beginnings', says Jesus. The disciples should have been ready to face anything, but that very same evening they are sure that they are about to drown along with their master. In fact, they doubt that Jesus even cares!¹³

Jesus' sleep is not the only allusion to a Psalm in this narrative. The sea itself is described in graphic terms: 'A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped' (Mark 4:37). One thinks of Psalm 107:23-27: 'Others went out on the sea in ships . . . They saw the works of the Lord . . . For he spoke and stirred up a tempest that lifted high the waves. They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths; in their peril their courage melted away. They reeled and staggered like drunken men; they were at their wits' end.' (Perhaps this Psalm inspired the popular sea shanty: 'What shall we do with a drunken sailor?').

Why do I suggest that Psalm 107 might be in Mark's mind as he narrates the story of the storm? Because he describes the outcome just as the psalmist had. The disciples wake Jesus in panic and then they experience the great miracle. Mark writes, 'Then the wind died down and it was completely calm' (4:39). The psalmist had written: 'Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress. He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed' (107:28,29). Jesus did for them what only God can do, muzzle the wind and calm the angry sea.

That reminds us of other Psalms that are alluded to here, for example: 'It was you who split open the sea by your power; you broke the heads of the monster in the waters. It was you who crushed the heads of Leviathan' (Psalm 74:13,14). For Jews steeped in their own history and sacred texts, the sea was the home of sinister evil powers. Only God could

¹³ Cf. Timothy J. Geddert, 'Three Lessons from a Boat', in *Double Take*, pp. 63-71.

open up a way through the angry sea, muzzle the powers of the deep, crush the monsters that threaten the security of God's people. Is it any wonder that Jesus' storm-stilling is narrated with very clear allusions to Jesus' prior acts of driving out demons: '[He] *rebuked* the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! *be still!* (lit. *be muzzled!*)"' – language Mark has already used to show how Jesus mastered demonic enemies (cf. 4:39; 1:25).

We come to perhaps the most interesting allusion to the Old Testament in this text. It is not from the Psalms but complements those that are. The disciples, all in a panic as they battle wind and waves, wake Jesus from his peaceful, trusting sleep – but why? What were they hoping he might do? Did they expect him to grab an oar? Join them pulling ropes, perhaps? Maybe pick up a pail and start bailing water? Of course not, they wanted him to calm the storm (we sometimes glibly imagine), until we examine the text and notice that this assumption does not fit at all.

For Jews steeped in their Old Testament, to still a storm at sea is of a completely different order of magnitude than the miracles the disciples had previously seen Jesus do. Clearly the disciples do *not* expect Jesus to calm the sea. Had they really believed he could do that, they would not have been utterly astonished when in fact he did. Nor would they have asked, 'Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!' (Mark 4:41).

Yet it is hard to believe they wanted nothing more than help with the oars and the ropes, help with the water pouring into their boat. Surely they, or at least Mark the author, is thinking of another incident, where another man sleeps in the bottom of a boat, while a storm is raging and the seafarers are in panic. So why did they wake Jonah? Well, they were at their wits' end. They had tried everything. Perhaps this man had a special connection to divine power. If he would call out to his God, perhaps they could all be saved after all. That must be what the disciples are thinking. Surely if this Jesus, the one who can heal and cleanse, cries out to the only one capable of calming an angry sea, then God will act.

Well, it works. God does intervene. Only Jesus does not bother praying. He just answers the prayer directly. He does not play the role of the intercessor. He plays the role of the one who answers prayer. Jesus answers the prayer they wanted him to utter. Who then is this? They really do not have a clue.

But the reader should by now. This is not the first time, and certainly not nearly the last time that Mark's Gospel will drop subtle hints that Jesus is not only a great miracle-worker, not only a great prophet, not only the Messiah, not only the Son of God – Jesus *is* God! Jesus does what only God can do. Only God can forgive sin, say the teachers of the law – so

Jesus does (2:1-12)! No one is good except God, Jesus tells the rich man – so either Jesus is not good or Jesus is God, take your pick (10:18)! Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?, ask Jesus' earthly judges. *Ego eimi* (*I Am*, i.e. aim higher!), says Jesus (14:61,62). Only God can calm the angry sea – so Jesus does (4:39). I do not think it is a stretch to claim that in Mark there are at least ten texts designed to communicate to the reader: If you have eyes to see it, you can recognise in Jesus the very person of God! But in every one of them the crucial hints are placed between the lines.

Once more we hear Psalm 107:28: 'They cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress. He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed.' Who did it? God did. The LORD did. *Yahweh* did. That is why *Jesus* did. 'Who then is this?'

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